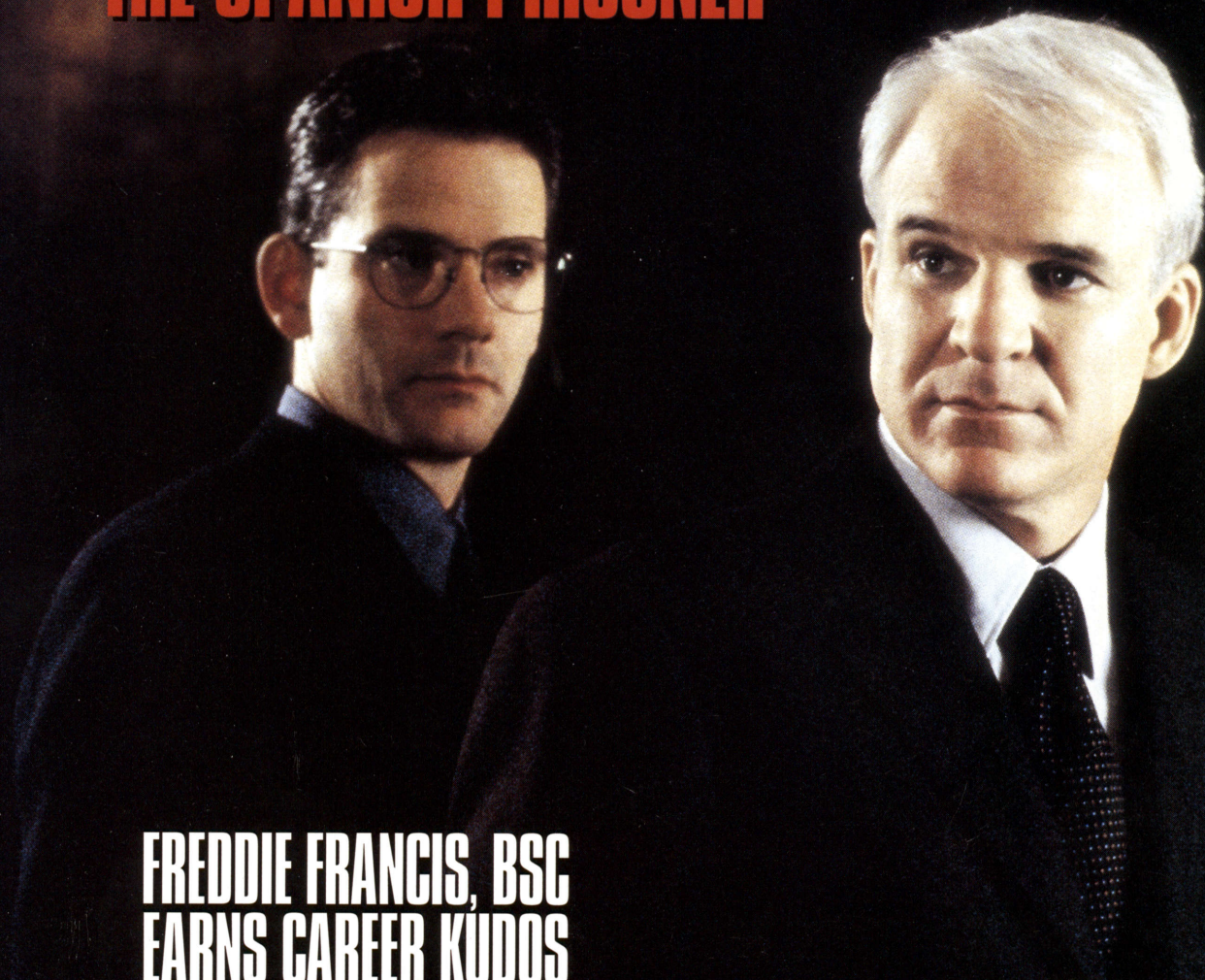


American Cinematographer

MARCH 1998

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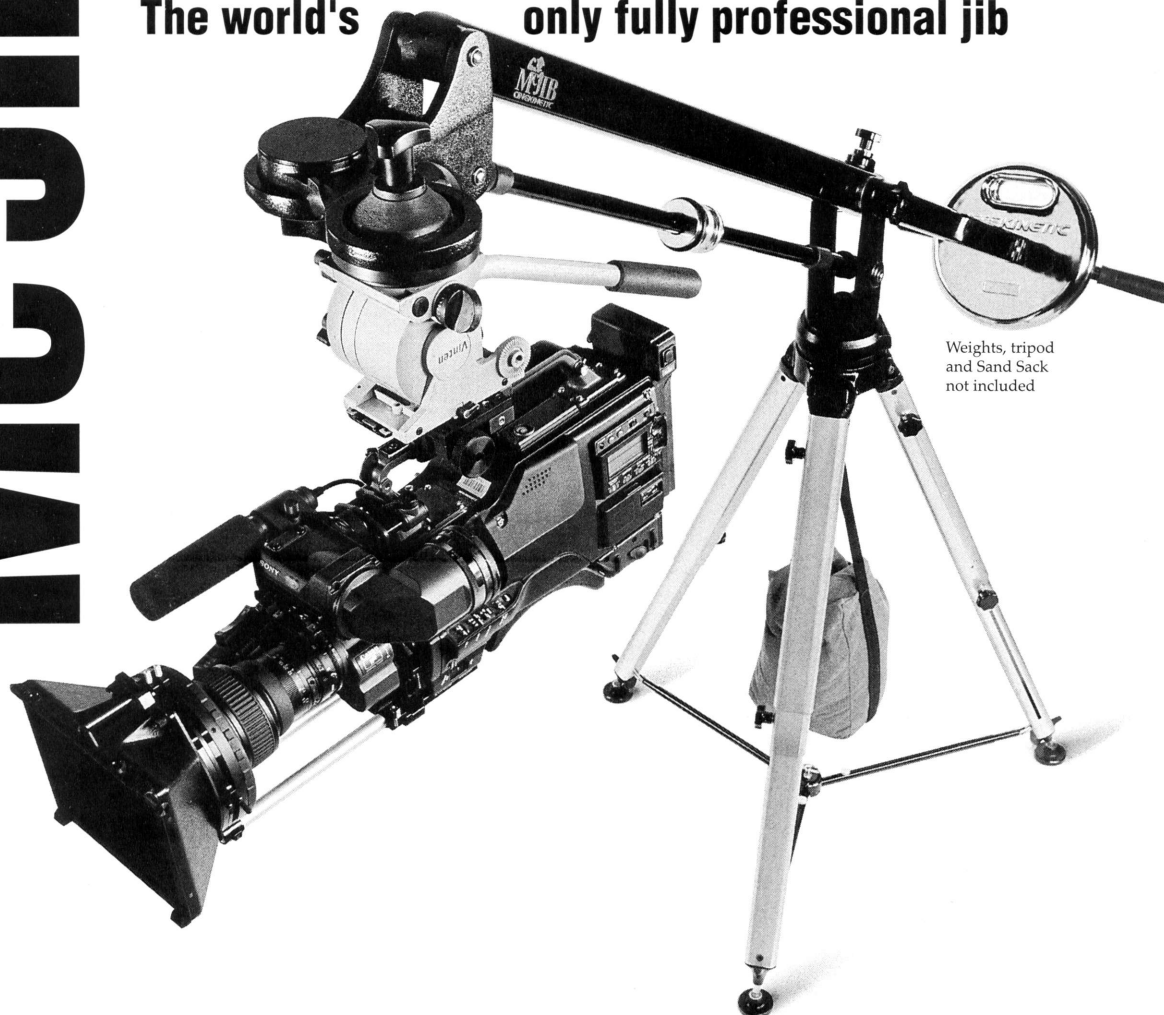
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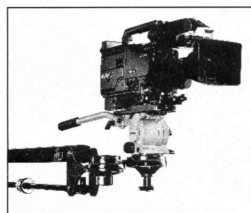
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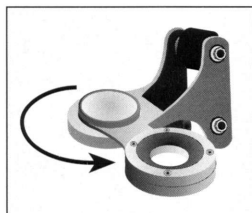


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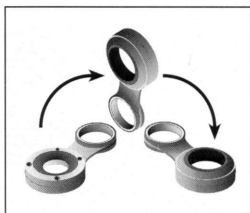
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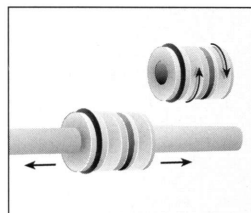
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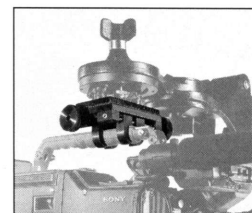
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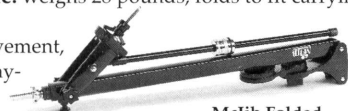


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On Our Cover:

A corporation's Machiavellian maneuvers lead inventor Joe Ross (Campbell Scott) to seek the help of a mysterious acquaintance (Steve Martin) in *The Spanish Prisoner*, directed by David Mamet and photographed by Gabriel Beristain, BSC (photo by James Bridges, courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics).

Contributing Authors:

Mark Dillon
Bill Linsman
Holly Willis

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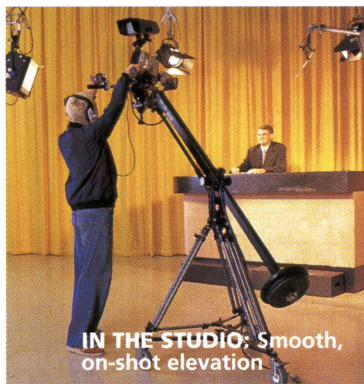


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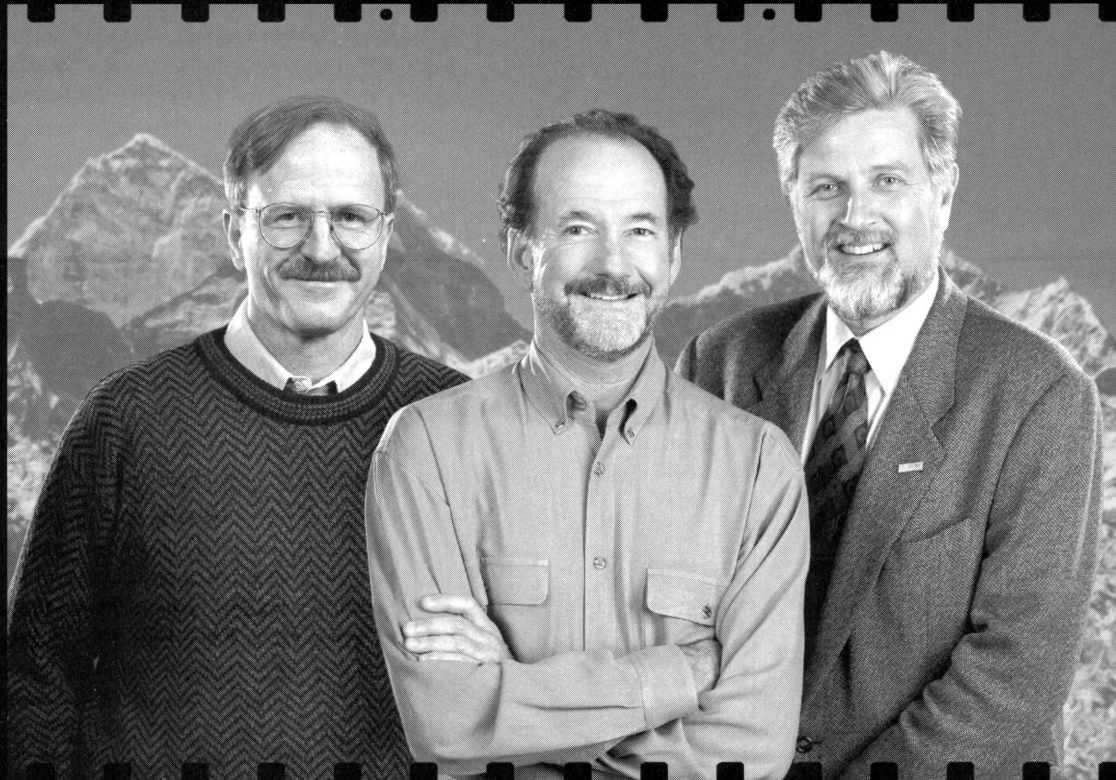
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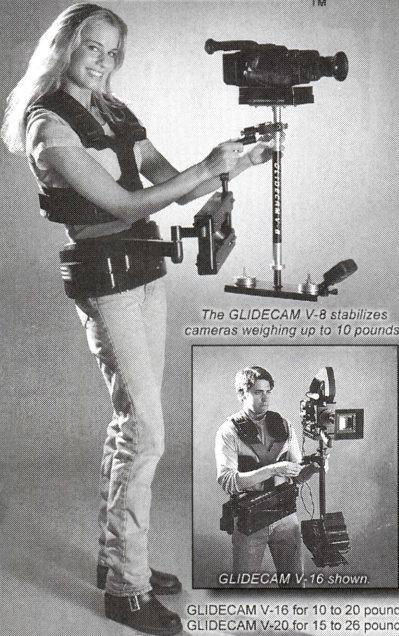
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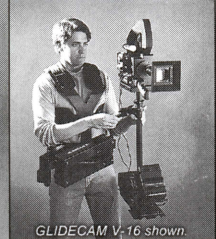
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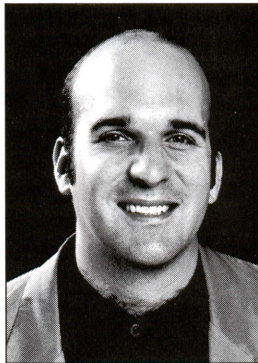
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Editor's Note



In recent years, pundits and public alike have hailed the rise of independent films as a welcome alternative to megabudget Hollywood offerings. Predictably enough, however, the realm of "independent film" has already been co-opted by major studios intent on turning arty or lower-budgeted pictures into a cottage industry. However well-deserved, the instant ascension of maverick directors like Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez, as well as the sudden prominence of former "boutique" distribution companies such as Miramax, have helped to create a universe in which independent films frequently serve

as mere calling cards for creative types seeking bigger projects and paydays. Indeed, the recent flurry of pricey acquisitions at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival indicates that today's indie filmmakers may well be the Tinseltown titans of tomorrow.

As agents and executives pan feverishly for proverbial gold at festivals and film markets, the notion of the truly independent filmmaker, who serves no master in his or her quest for cinematic self-expression, may come to seem increasingly naive and romantic. Given the current climate, in which anyone armed with a Bolex could conceivably be crowned the Next Big Thing, one is tempted to draw a distinction between overnight sensations and authentically singular thinkers.

Fortunately, there are still some healthy indications that unique artists will continue to find a canvas for their cinematic ideas. Certainly, no one can accuse filmmakers such as David Mamet and Gabriel Beristain, BSC (*The Spanish Prisoner*, see page 40), Alan Rudolph and Toyomichi Kurita (*Afterglow*, page 52) or John Sayles and Slawomir Idziak (*Men With Guns*, page 80) of pandering to mainstream appetites; all of these experienced collaborators continue to challenge themselves and their audiences with adventurous material. Likewise, there still exists a thriving cinematic subculture populated by eager young auteurs more interested in making their mark onscreen than in making the scene at Morton's. Films like *Kitchen Party* (page 66) and *Shopping for Fangs* (page 72) are blissfully free of the formulaic plots or characters that result from endless test screenings and market surveys.

This issue of *American Cinematographer* salutes the true spirit of independent cinema by focusing upon a group of filmmakers who are more motivated by the creative muse than the lure of mammon. In pondering the trendy prominence of "independent cinema," Alan Rudolph cut to the heart of the matter when he told *AC* writer Ron Magid, "I appreciate the spirit of what everyone's calling the independent [film], but I don't like labels, and all of the independent distributors are basically the new establishment. I keep saying, 'Aren't we supposed to strive to be original and true? Isn't that the goal?'"

Here's hoping that Rudolph's rhetorical question will reach the ears of cinema's next generation.

Sincerely,

Stephen Pizzello, Executive Editor
e-mail: stephen_pizzello@cinematographer.com

YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH SUCCESS.

Director of Photography, Julio Macat is no stranger to success. If you total up the worldwide box office receipts from four of his recent feature films, you will pass the one billion dollar mark rather quickly. On the set of "Home Alone 3", Mr. Macat used the new Arriflex Zeiss Variable Prime lenses for the first time. Initially he thought he would just shoot a few scenes with them, but he wound up shooting 90% of the film with the Variable Primes.



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Letters

Trek Collective

In the December issue, the letter from Open Films, intended to clarify the credits for Illusion Arts' *Star Trek: First Contact* opening shot, unintentionally adds confusion. The Electric Image press release referred to in the letter unfortunately left that impression that our 3-D modeling expert, Fumi Mashimo, created the entire shot.

The corrective letter refers to a "team effort," but credits Robert Stromberg (who is now a commercials director at Open Films) for supervision, design, painting, compositing, 3-D models and so on, leaving little to occupy the (unnamed) team.

For the record, the *First Contact* shot was designed (from script pages) under the supervision of Syd Dutton by Robert Stromberg and Michael Wassel. Stromberg and Wassel also created the painting elements for the final shot. 3-D model elements were created and rendered in Form Z and Electric Image by Fumi Mashimo and Wassel. Composites were created in Electric Image and After Effects by Mashimo and our Digital Department head, Richard Patterson. Mr. Patterson and Ken Nakada also took on the difficult task of joining the macro motion control and wild 80' pullback crane shots of Patrick Stewart into a seamless whole. The entire shot was created on Macintosh computers.

This has proven to be a signature shot for our company. The whole Illusion Arts team deserves recognition for their achievement.

— Bill Taylor, ASC
Illusion Arts, Inc.

Ed. note: Robert Stromberg also wrote us to point out that this shot was a team effort, noting that Mr. Taylor photographed the first portion of the pullback on a stage at Paramount. AC offers a tip of the hat to the entire group for creating a truly impressive shot; here's hoping

that we won't be jettisoned into space by Mr. Patterson, a former editor of American Cinematographer.

Review Praise

Thank you for the very complementary review of my book *Film Choreographers and Dance Directors* in the November issue. I was especially pleased to read the many details included by Mr. Turner. Obviously, he took the time to look through it, and I hope that it might be something in his library which will be referred to periodically when he comes upon an unfamiliar film or choreographer.

My only regret is that after he so generously describes it as "a whale of a good reference book," he also dubs it as sporting "a whale of a price tag." Another of Mr. Turner's quotes refers to my book as "not just another fluff piece about Busby Berkeley, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly." When I initially sent out query letters, the mainstream publishers who were interested wanted the book to be just that.

McFarland & Company published it exactly the way I intended it, along with all the photos I submitted — for we all felt that dance is a visual art. I cannot say enough good things about the integrity of the people at McFarland who edited the author's excesses, never the information or photographs. We have all commiserated over the price, but McFarland is a research book publisher, so they do not have the huge printings or distribution, as do other mainstream publishers: hence the hefty price. I am sorry about this, for I would love for every film and dance student and fan in America to be able to have it in their library. Hopefully, if sales warrant it, McFarland might be encouraged to release a more economical paperback edition. After recently paying \$75 to see *Ragtime*, I am not positive that \$110 is too high a price for something that lasts longer than three hours.

I am now working on *Film Dancers*, the companion book which I have been contracted by McFarland to write. I can then document the lives and careers of another group of people who I feel have not been given their proper recognition.

— Larry Billman
Brea, CA

Errata

In the January edition of Clubhouse News (p. 131), new ASC associate member Jack Bonura was erroneously granted the titles of "president of Local 644 and regional president of local 600." Since the merger of the unions, Sol Negrin, ASC has served as president of the eastern region and as national vice president. We offer our sincere apologies to Mr. Negrin, a longtime friend of the magazine.

In our December coverage of *Titanic*, we included several photographs of modelmakers at work on scale versions of the infamous ocean liner (p. 81), but incorrectly credited the photographs to Vision Crew Unlimited. In fact, the top photo shows a large-scale miniature built by Donald Pennington, Inc, while the two lower photos illustrate the work of Digital Domain. AC regrets the error.

Clarification

The recent article about the 1958 documentary *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (Production Slate, Jan. '98), includes a reference to the "now-defunct New York rental company" CECO. In 1985, the Manhattan-based S&B CECO was acquired by Donald Kline, who renamed the firm CECO International. As most of our readers are aware, CECO is still a thriving camera equipment rental company. AC regrets any confusion that the article may have caused. ■

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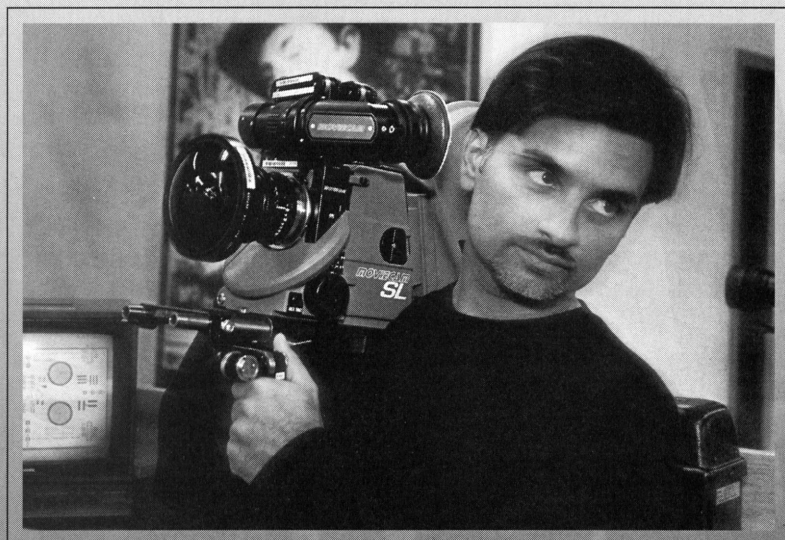
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server. From that, every colorist can work on his or her project and output to whatever format is required."

As the Warner's gears up to transfer to 1080-line HD (the highest U.S. high-resolution standard), the studio is in the midst of putting the last pieces of new telecine system into place and turning theory into practice. Here, in theory, is how the HD transfer system will work: the film will be transferred as a best one-light on the Philips Spirit DataCine, and then stored with both the Panasonic D-5 High-Definition Recorders and the Pluto HyperSPACE High-Definition Recorders. With the film transfer existing on the file server, Warner Bros. will down-convert the HD version to PAL 625, using a device created by the Burbank-based VAS Group.

Next, the film will be color-corrected and size-manipulated in 625; these corrections will then be applied to the HD one-light. "This allows us to color-correct for high definition without investing in standard-specific equipment," details Yarbrough. "If we outfitted our rooms for 1080 hi-def today, we couldn't use it later on for higher resolutions. Instead, I can make all the color corrections in 625 and not make a major investment in equipment I'll have to throw away in two years."

Cookson points out that the Pluto server offers the advantage of complete and instant access to the entire film, without being restricted by the physical elements. The system also offers benefits for directors and cinematographers. "From the file server, the director and the cinematographer, along with the colorist, go through and make all of the decisions about framing and color-correction," notes Cookson. "That'll get you a 1.33:1 version for conventional TV, both NTSC and PAL. The next thing is to apply those correction values to the high-resolution image, looking at the HD monitor and tweaking the values for HD. What that amounts to is that the work you did for the standard-definition version becomes an offline color-correction session for the HD version, so your time working in HD is more productive. You're fine-tuning, not working from scratch."

Photo of Bernard Salzman by Joel Lipton

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Production Slate

compiled by **Andrew O. Thompson**



Gleaming the *Cube* by Mark Dillon

Picture, if you will, six total strangers awakening to find themselves confined within a seemingly endless series of interconnected rooms, each of which is, in fact, a cube — one of thousands comprising a single massive cube. A mathematical formula seems to hold the key to the captives' escape from this mysterious, M.C. Escher-like nightmare, provided they can survive a succession of fatal booby traps, and one another.

This is the premise of the Canadian independent film *Cube*, a sort of *Ten Little Indians in the Twilight Zone* which signals the 35mm feature debut of director Vincenzo Natali and cinematographer Derek Rogers.

Recently featured as a midnight movie at the Sundance Film Festival, *Cube* was produced with the financial backing of the Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film Project. The Toronto-based CFC was founded in 1986 by hometown director Norman Jewison as a training ground for Canada's emerging film and television writers, producers, and directors; the Feature Film Project was estab-

lished six years later, offering some of the Centre's graduates the opportunity to make a feature film with a \$350,000 cash grant (approximately \$250,000 American) matched with the equivalent monetary value in services donated from the local film industry. What makes *Cube* stand out from the CFC-FFP's previous output is its science-fiction scenario and ambitious

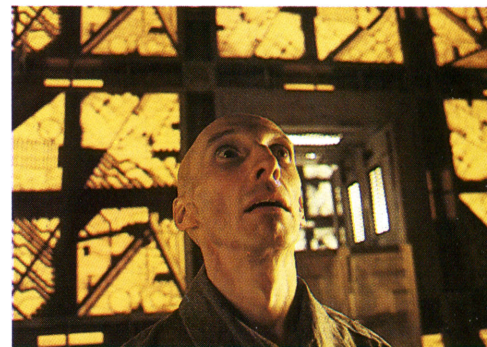
visuals; the film features a deft combination of old-fashioned cinematic ingenuity and digital effects work which belies its \$1 million budget (Canadian).

Natali had previously done a stint at Toronto's Ryerson Polytechnic University film program, followed by work as a storyboard artist at the Nelvana animation studio. On the strength of several short films, Natali became a director-in-residence at the CFC, where he saw several shorts shot by Rogers, a fellow Ryerson alumnus. Rogers had left film school as an aspiring director, but later accepted cinematographic duties on a documentary that was shooting in Zimbabwe. Eventually, Rogers veered into dramatic work, but he found his documentary experiences to be invaluable, noting, "That work taught me to assess real-life situations, set up and light fast, and be fluid with a handheld camera."

Natali found these abilities to be a boon as he prepared his 30-minute CFC short *Elevated*, in which three people become trapped in an elevator, with one of the trio convinced that aliens have taken over the building. Both the director and cinematographer considered the

short to be a warmup for *Cube*, according to Natali, *Elevated* allowed them "to show that we could make a box — in this case the elevator set — visually interesting, which was one of the reservations people had about making *Cube*." (*Elevated* was later nominated for Best Short Film at the Genies, the Canadian equivalent of the Academy Awards.)

Cube, however, entailed six characters journeying through more than 50 identical yet visually diverse cubes. Inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, Natali envisioned a "symmetry and mathematical design to the sets," which would create the sense of a "pristine future." But Rogers dissuaded him from going with entirely white cubes, expressing the concern that they would appear to be too similar. "I pushed the idea of multiple colors, similar to a Rubik's Cube," he recalls. With the main cube set standing in for 50, the filmmakers differentiated each with one of five colors — white, green, straw, red, and blue. The budget allowed for the construction of only 1 1/2 actual cubes — one full-standing set and a hatchway that offered a view of two



Above:
Leaven (Nicole de Boer) looks on dejectedly as her fellow captors contemplate their bizarre predicament in *Cube*.
Right: Aldersen (Julian Richings) gazes in awe at the kaleidoscopic, cubic prison.

other walls. Production designer Jasna Stefanovic constructed the cube out of white frosted Plexiglas walls decorated with black patterns and diagrams; in total, the structure measured 15' x 15' with a hatch on each of the six sides

Photos by Sophie Giraud.

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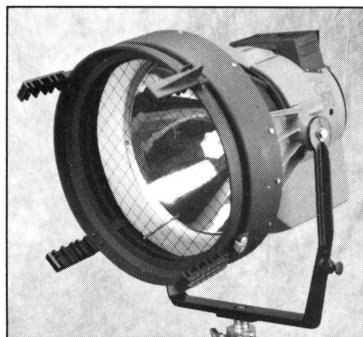
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leading into another "cube."

To light the variously hued cube spaces, Rogers explains, "we would start with the white cube, put in all these gel frames, and end up with a color. We had to do that for all six sides of the cube, so changing them over was a major undertaking, especially since Vincenzo wanted to shoot in chronological order, which meant we couldn't shoot all of the red cubes and then all of the green cubes. We were constantly going back and forth with the different colors." Scenes in the film where the characters move among different-colored cubes — taking up mere seconds of screen time — required days to film due to the laborious need to change gels. Rogers recalls the situation being a "continuity nightmare," especially when the characters end up returning to the cube in which they began their journey. To prevent visual inconsistencies, the cameraman says he created "a lighting 'bible' for each side of every cube, so we knew what our exposure levels were for every wall, and every key light."

In planning the cube's illumination, Natali borrowed an idea from John Alcott, BSC's work on Kubrick's aforementioned space odyssey. "I loved the quality of the sequence at the end of *2001* where astronaut Bowman is in that Victorian-style room, which is lit from beneath a Plexiglas floor," he says. Thus, Rogers lit the cube with what he terms "light walls" — fields of 1,200 100-watt light bulbs dispersed evenly on wooden frames positioned behind the cube's sides, over the ceiling, and under the floor. "We had everything on a gigantic dimmer package so we could dim each wall separately," Rogers adds. "What was crucial in creating different-looking cubes was using varying brightness levels in the walls. In each cube I had one 'key wall' so the audience would always know where the light source for that room was coming from, whether it was one of the walls, the floor, or the ceiling."

However, lighting from behind the Plexiglas did not provide enough illumination to give the actors a proper exposure, and adding more bulbs to the light walls would have made the background

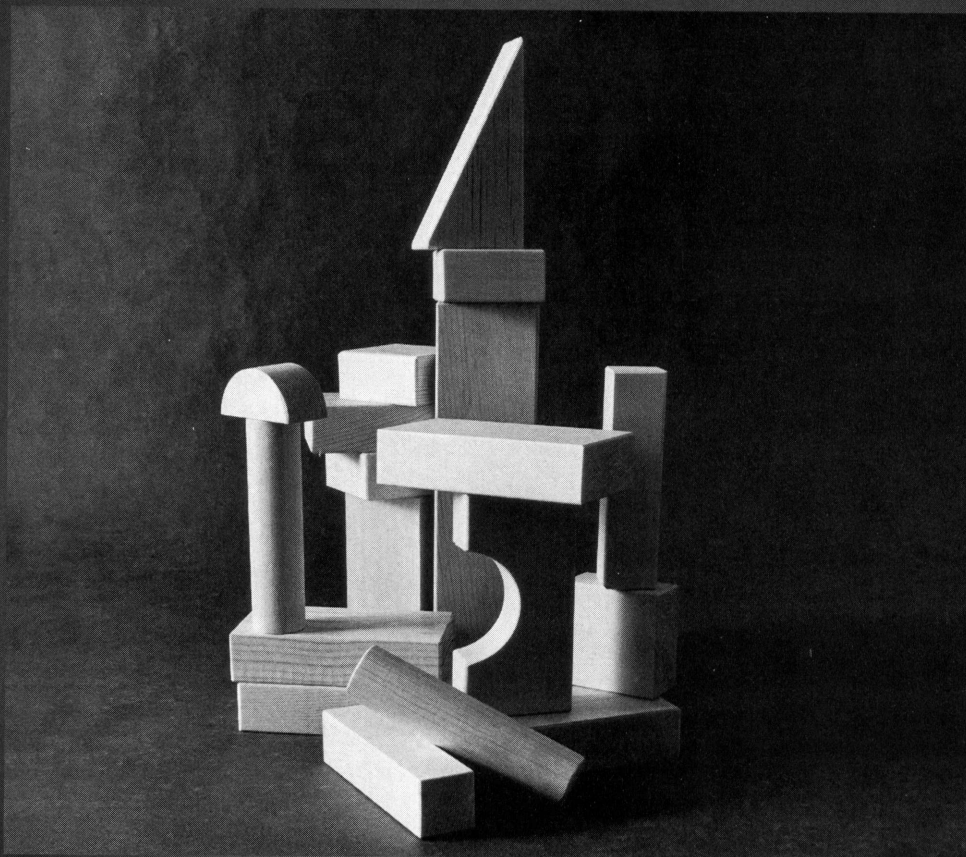
far too bright. Rogers discloses, "I had to keep the light levels in the walls down to get color saturation, so to light the actors I had to 'cheat' lights into the cube." When the cameraman was keying light from beneath the actors, he used Kino Flos laid out on the floor; from the side walls, he aimed 5Ks through white diffusion frames. He also suspended four 1K space lights from the ceiling.

Early on-set tests forced Rogers to change film stocks. "Originally, I wanted to use Kodak's 100 ASA 5248 stock, which I find superior in terms of grain and quality," states the cameraman. "I had actually ordered all of my stock, but I later found the colored gels to be so dense that I couldn't get enough exposure from my 'light walls.' I therefore had to switch to 200 ASA 5293."

Overall, *Cube's* lighting tactics were dictated more by dramatic tone than concerns of physical realism. The cameraman points out that this emphasis on dramatically-motivated lighting hails from his appreciation for the stylish work of Christopher Doyle, HKSC, particularly on the Wong Kar-Wai film *Chungking Express*. Rogers submits, "Wong Kar-Wai and Chris Doyle shoot very emotionally. It's very important for a cinematographer to respond emotionally to what's going on in front of the camera, which translates into camera positions and movement, as well as lighting. [On *Cube*], Derek and I really tried to create a lighting arc." Adds Natali, "The look changes subtly throughout the course of the film. We tended to light the early scenes from the sides of the cube, whereas towards the end of the story we lit from the floor." During a confrontation scene in the middle of the film, one of the prisoners, Worth (David Hewlett), admits that he was involved in the cube's design; Rogers suggested using a red cube for this scene, choosing to light from above to create the aura of "a religious confession."

The cinematographer estimates the some 85 percent of the film was shot handheld, save for scenes requiring a locked-off camera to facilitate digital effects. Natali and Rogers both felt that a handheld style would be a logical

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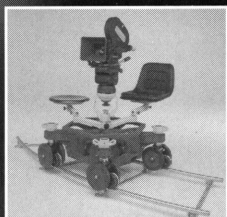
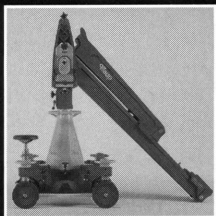
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approach considering that they had to complete 30 to 40 setups per day over a 20-day schedule. Notes Rogers, "We were working in a very claustrophobic space, so we couldn't use dollies and there was no budget for Steadicam." Aware of Rogers' steadiness as an operator from their collaboration on *Elevated*, Natali found that he could pull off "some nice moves that don't necessarily look handheld." Shakier handheld shots were reserved for *Cube's* tenser moments, lending a desired sense of unease.

Natali and Rogers both prefer wide-angle lenses, and used mostly 10mm, 18mm and 24mm Zeiss primes. "I like a lot of depth of field, especially when you have an ensemble piece," Natali expounds. "I like to have a character in the foreground and see somebody reacting to them in the background. Although the film is claustrophobic, the 10mm lens makes the set feel bigger; the interior of the cubes becomes very dwarfing, as though these people are children in a grown-up world." Rogers adds that the wide lenses allowed the filmmakers to "play the characters very close to the camera, creating a visual and emotional sense of fear that is crucial in telling the story."

To allow himself the greatest mobility in a very restricted space, Rogers employed an Aaton 35-III, which weighed 15-20 pounds; he recalls reading in *American Cinematographer* that Brian Tufano, BSC used the compact camera on *Trainspotting* (see *AC* Aug.'96). Rogers was so impressed with that film's imagery that the 35-III became his camera of choice on *Cube*. First, however, he had to clear that decision with CORE Digital Pictures (best known for creating the CG geese in *Fly Away Home*) who were executing the film's visual effects free of charge. Rogers performed a steadiness test which CORE found acceptable, although the cameraman admits that "they had some problems in the animation process and had to do extra work just to steady the image."

One of the most notable CG effects in *Cube* is the design of the immense structure's exterior, which is seen when the characters get to the

cube's outer edge and lower one of their comrades by rope to investigate. According to Natali, the original script merely described 'a black abyss,' until [CORE demonstrated] that the exterior could be lit and have detail, which opened up the film visually. If we hadn't shown something new when the characters finally look over the edge, the audience would have gone batty from seeing the same interior." The crew initially shot a 40' x 40' outdoor cube wall as an element; CORE's animators then duplicated the image and added the mindbending illusion of the thousands of cubes that encompass the whole structure.

As the characters in the film soon discover, the cubes periodically shift their positions relative to the overall cube, causing the rooms to vibrate fiercely. The production could not rent a suitable camera-shaking rig locally, but importing one from Los Angeles would have been far too costly. Rogers improvised by constructing one of his own. Details the cinematographer, "We wanted to create a rumble that was different from what you see in all of the big action films, and the only way to do that was to create our own rig." Toward this end, Rogers borrowed an industrial-size vibrator used to shake garbage out of construction bins, mounted it under a plywood frame with rubber shocks, then placed the camera on top of the shocks. Rogers used his Arriflex 35-III to shoot the shaking sequence, since the forcefully rhythmic motion would have pulverized the tiny Aaton. The cameraman is particularly proud of his makeshift apparatus, noting, "The whole thing cost about \$30, and I think we got a really good effect."

In closing, the cinematographer finds ample comparisons between the Kafkaesque machinations of the film's plot and the ordeal of capturing *Cube* on celluloid. "Filmmaking is a magic show," suggests Rogers. "You just have to figure out the right trick to use. *Cube* is about six people in a gigantic puzzle trying to find their way out. The shooting of the film was very much a gigantic puzzle for us, with the cinematic bag of tricks offering the solution." ➤

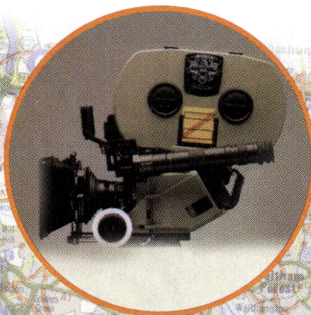


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Above: In *Eden*, depressed and debilitated housewife Helen Kunan (Joanna Going) finds freedom from society through astral projection. The picturesque imagery of Helen's world serves as a contrast to her feelings of despair. Right: The half-lit face of husband Bill (Dylan Walsh) is meant to indicate his inner turmoil after he is informed of Helen's illness. Far right: Writer/director Howard Goldberg and Polish cameraman Hubert Taczanowski on location in Seattle, Washington.



Rediscovering *Eden* by Holly Willis

Set in the 1960s at a small New England prep school, writer/director Howard Goldberg's *Eden* focuses on housewife Helen Kunan (Joanna Going), who seems to be living a nearly perfect family life. However, she happens to suffer from a worsening case of multiple sclerosis, and also feels the acute sense of despair defined by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* — a melancholia experienced by many women in the late 1950s and '60s due to their limited roles as housewives. Helen does find a wondrous expanse of freedom from physical and social constraints during a series of out-of-body journeys; these astrally projected excursions encourage Helen's thoughts of leaving that body, and her life, for good. Goldberg's film explores the dilemma faced by Helen, and its effects on the people around her — particularly her overbearing husband, Bill (Dylan Walsh).

Goldberg and Polish cinematographer Hubert Taczanowski chose to depict Helen's deepening depression in an unusual way — with clear, strong,

evenly-lit images. "The visual design contributes to the contrapuntal aspect of the film," explains Goldberg. "There's so much turmoil under the surface of this bucolic setting that it was important for us to find the right locations. It couldn't take place in a high school in New Jersey; [the setting] had to be this separate little world, a physically beautiful place where everything is perfect and ordered, but all wrong for Helen."

The director had been impressed with Taczanowski's camera movement on the dark comedy *The Young Poisoner's Handbook*, and asked him to consider shooting a low-budget American feature. Taczanowski, a graduate of the Lodz Film School in Poland, emigrated to America in 1989 and became a cinematographer of features and award-winning music videos. His film credits include *The Breakup*, *Last Exit to Earth*, *The Opposite of Sex*, *Three Believers*, *Parts and Labor* and HBO's *Perversions of Science*. Says Goldberg, "We had a similar view of how the film should look, and since we were so in tune with each other, there really wasn't much arguing. Hubert is really a master of lighting. He's just brilliant at it, and that, of course, is 50 percent of being a director of photography, if not more. In very short periods of time, he was able to give [the film] a rich, dense, beautiful look."

For Taczanowski, who spent much of his early career working in London, the absence of storyboards was something of a new experience. "I always like to work with storyboards, but I've found that American directors don't like to use them," he says. "It was difficult, because in England I found that it was easier [to plan shots] with storyboards. But Howard wanted more spontaneity. He would block the scene and then we'd sit on the set and figure out how we'd do it. He's got a very good sense of what he wants, and was able to choose from my ideas."

Goldberg viewed storyboards as

an unaffordable luxury. After speaking with his leads, the director decided to abandon any attachments to specific blocking until the actors had a solid understanding of the locations. After a week's worth of production, Goldberg did revise this more spontaneous method. "I realized that the approach needed a bit more structure, so I started planning and giving more definitive instructions on what needed to be done — more for the sake of expediency. I still let the actors do whatever they wanted to do, but they were working within tighter parameters."

Finding a location to recreate 1960s New England for *Eden*'s 22-day shoot took some searching. Goldberg needed not only a photogenic setting but one which also offered access to a professional crew and experienced local actors. "Although we were making a film on a shoestring [\$1.2 million budget], we wanted it to resemble a \$20 million Merchant-Ivory film," the director says. "We thought about shooting in Los Angeles, but we realized that there was no way we could patch it together to look like a New England campus in the 1960s. And we couldn't go to New



England — it was just too expensive. We finally narrowed it down to Vancouver, Seattle and Portland, and ultimately settled on Seattle because it had the best combination of elements."

The principal site was the Saint Thomas Seminary, located just outside Seattle. This seminary is not a small, charming, New England-style building, but rather a 600'-long structure resembling army barracks; Goldberg and crew nevertheless made the location fit their needs.

On the first day of shooting, however, cast and crew discovered some-

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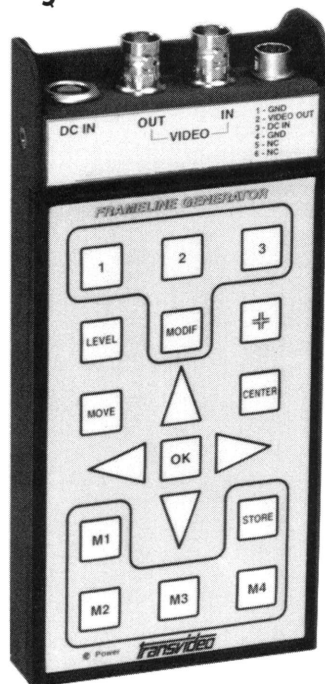
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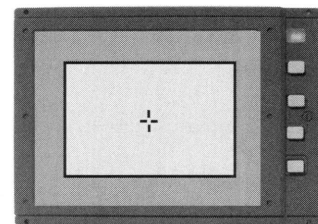
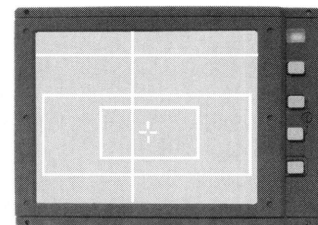
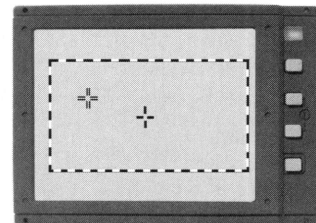
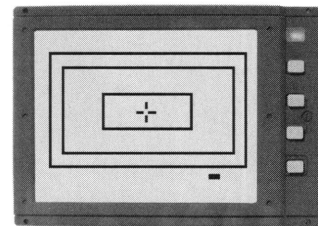
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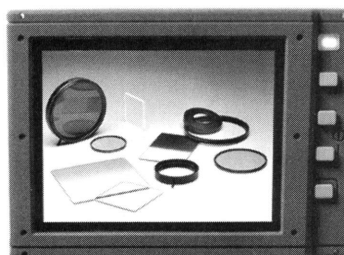


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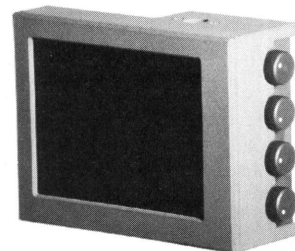
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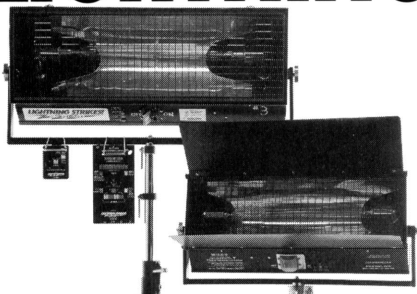
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thing that had gone unnoticed during the location scout: the nearby Boeing aircraft factory. The company is situated just outside Seattle and often tests new planes in local skies. "Every 30 minutes or so they'd start up the engines," recalls Taczanowski. "It was our biggest obstacle during the whole shoot. On the first day, the sun was going down, and we were trying to do a big walk-and-talk scene in the driveway — we just couldn't shoot it. It was very frustrating, and even worse since it was our first day. We ended up doing that scene for more than five hours, and we had to light it at the end because we finally lost the sun."

Shooting in Seattle did present some advantages, however. Goldberg, for one, was thrilled with the cast and crew members he was able to pick up far from Los Angeles. "There was an enormous pool of top-notch talent," the director discloses. "Ninety percent of the crew that worked on my film were alumni from [the series] *Northern Exposure*, and that was an unbelievable asset. These people were top pros, from costumes to makeup to set design. My other fear was that we would bring these great actors from Los Angeles, but never find equally skilled supporting talent. Thankfully, that concern turned out to be groundless."

Goldberg was also very pleased with the show's locations, which he felt functioned well as substitutes for his desired East Coast aesthetic. One of the best sites was a house which the director and producers Harvey Kahn and Chip Duncan were able to secure for nearly a week. From Taczanowski's perspective, however, this home posed several cinematographic dilemmas. "It was a beautiful house, but it was so old that it was very difficult to put lights on the roof. With the budget we had, the grips had to really scramble in order not to destroy the walls, and still be able to hang some lights."

Hanging the lights helped Taczanowski maneuver his camera in the cramped space, but this still proved demanding since Taczanowski was wielding a Panavision camera for the first time. "Because I come from Europe,

I always used Arri cameras: we never had Panavision in Poland or England. But Panavision donated the camera, and even shipped the equipment to Seattle. It was a great camera, and I've used Panavision every time I've worked in the U.S. since then. I'm prepping a film now in England, and I'm trying to get Panavision for that project."

Taczanowski prefers simplicity in his photography, and as a result is reluctant to use filters. "I like a natural look," he explains. "I feel that using filters or artificially changing the light is a form of interference. I really admire Roger Deakins [ASC, BSC] and others like him who don't use any filters. Since *Eden* is a sad story, I wanted to make it quite pretty and quite simple. In the story, time seems to stand still, so I wanted to shoot it as though it was constantly late afternoon, [lending the impression] that Helen's life has somehow stopped and there is no hope for change."

The resulting footage depicts a strikingly pristine world, one which seems to glisten in the cool afternoon sun of an East Coast autumn day. Blue and white hues beautify shots of Helen alone in the afternoons, and crystal-clear colors augment the buildings on the fictional campus. Presenting such a visually appealing world makes Helen's unhappiness all the more unnerving.

Certain scenes with Helen's husband Bill contrast these picturesque images with a slightly different aesthetic. While visiting the family doctor, Bill's half-lit face effectively conveys his inner turmoil as he tries to comprehend his wife's strange behavior. "I felt that Bill was very ashamed to talk to the doctor, so I wanted to light him so that if he wanted to hide himself in a shadow, he could. He could sort of slide down out of the light," notes Taczanowski.

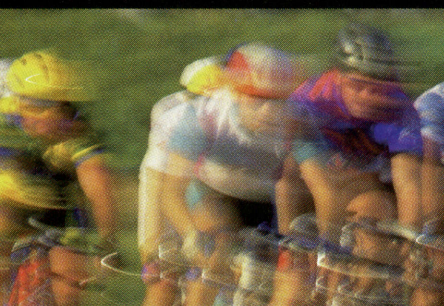
The film's lighting package was relatively small, which complemented the cinematographer's desire to keep things simple. He explains, "We had a few big lights — two or three 12K HMIs — and I used them as sun sources. I blasted them through the windows to make sunlight, and the rest we used according to what we needed. I put a lot



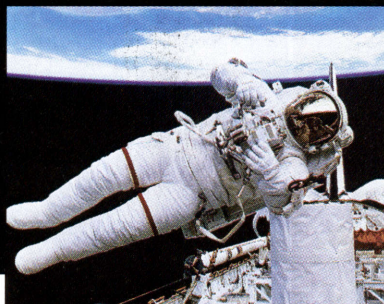
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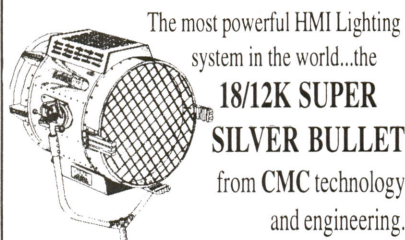
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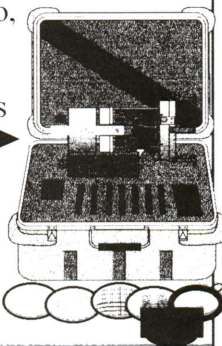
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of yellow gels on those lights to balance them with the natural sunlight." He also suspended smaller lights — Peppers and other tungsten sources — from above. "Everything we had was either outside the windows or hanging from the ceiling, which made the actors feel as if they could move wherever they wanted to. It gave them more room to perform, but that type of approach can sometimes

backfire on you when they don't hit their marks. In those types of situations, you need a really good focus-puller."

The cinematographer shot *Eden* with Fuji film stocks. "We used Fuji because it was less expensive," Taczanowski says. "I found that it gets a little too red sometimes, especially on skin tones. Our Seattle crew had an inexperienced loader, and at one point she

1998 Spirit Award Nominees

The nominations for the 13th annual Independent Spirit Awards were recently announced at an IFP/West reception at Los Angeles' swank El Rey Theater. These honors will be bestowed on March 21 at the traditional tent-covered beachside ceremony in Santa Monica and will be televised live by the Independent Film Channel. To qualify for eligibility, a film must have shown at a commercial theater during the 1997 calendar year or have played at one of the following film festivals: New York, Seattle, Sundance, Telluride, Toronto or New Directors/New Films. Nominees from selected categories are listed below. The winners will be listed in an upcoming issue of *AC*.

Best Cinematography

Michael Barrow and John Foster: *Sunday*

Frank DeMarco: *Habit*

Robert Elswit, BSC: *Hard Eight*

Declan Quinn: *Kama Sutra*

Alex Vender: *The Bible and Gun Club*

Best Feature (given to the producer)

The Apostle: Rob Carliner

Chasing Amy: Scott Mosier

Loved: Philippe Caland

Ulee's Gold: Sam Gowan & Peter Saraf

Waiting for Guffman: Karen Murphy

Best First Feature (given to the director)

The Bible and Gun Club: Daniel J. Harris

Eve's Bayou: Kasi Lemmons

Hard Eight: Paul Thomas Anderson

In the Company of Men: Neil LaBute

Star Maps: Miguel Arteta

Best Director

Robert Duvall: *The Apostle*

Larry Fessenden: *Habit*

Victor Nuñez: *Ulee's Gold*

Paul Schrader: *Touch*

Wim Wenders: *The End of Violence*

Best Foreign Film (given to the director)

The Sweet Hereafter: Atom Egoyan (Canada)

Happy Together: Wong Kar-Wai (Hong Kong)

Nenette and Boni: Claire Denis (France)

Boca a Boca (Mouth to Mouth): Manuel Gómez Pereira (Spain)

Underground: Emir Kusturica (France/Germany/Hungary)

mixed up the films: we were shooting a night scene, and suddenly everything was underexposed two stops. Still, we were able to pull it out in the print, and that says something good about Fuji — it has a lot of latitude.”

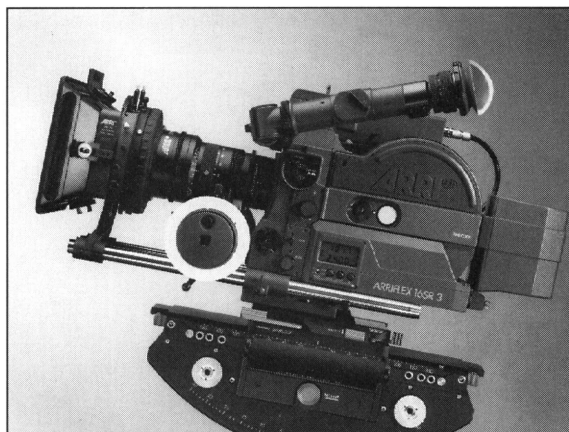
Taczanowski utilized Primo prime lenses throughout the shoot. “We never went wider than the 21mm, and the longest lens we used was the 70mm. I don’t use zooms. Although there are fantastic zooms available from Arri and Panavision, I’d rather move the camera. I’m really in love with dollying and pushing in and out and adjusting. My philosophy is that when I’m looking at actors, I always put the camera on a dolly and I always make adjustments, even small ones — 10” or 20” — moving the camera left or right to get a better view. It’s like when you’re watching something and someone blocks your view; you adjust by moving a little bit. That’s how I approach moviemaking — not necessarily in dramatic movements, like Scorsese does, but rather back and forth, to the left or right.”

Beyond the free Panavision package, Goldberg managed to score other contributions that helped make his film look more expensive — including visual effects work done by Gene Warren of Fantasy II, who earned an Academy Award for his contributions to *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Warren was instrumental in creating Helen’s out-of-body flights, which were done optically, a more affordable approach which also lent these sequences a different look in an age accustomed to the digital aesthetic.

Todd-AO West also made a key contribution by doing all of the project’s sound work for free. “They did it as an investment in the film,” says Goldberg. “Amazingly enough, Richie Hassanein, who runs Todd-AO West, is someone I’ve known since I was a kid. By the purest of coincidences, the Hassaneins were my next-door neighbors in Glen Cove, Long Island. In fact, Salah Hassanein was very instrumental in my getting into this business.” When Goldberg was growing up, Salah Hassanein was the head of the United

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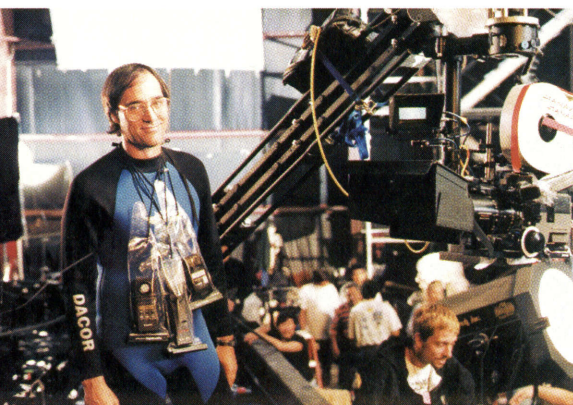
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— Russell Carpenter, ASC

Carpenter's credits include *Titanic*, *The Negotiator*, *Money Talks*, *Terminator 2: 3-D*; *The Indian in the Cupboard* and *True Lies*.

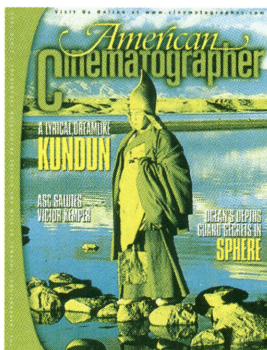
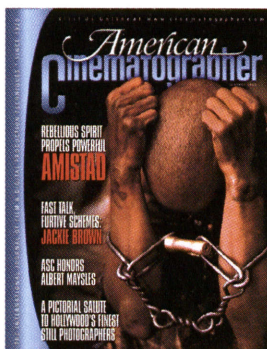
He is a 1997 ASC Awards nominee for Best Cinematography (*Titanic*), co-chair of the American Society of Cinematographers Web Site Committee, AND avid reader of *American Cinematographer* magazine.

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Artists Theater circuit. "He would always have screenings in his backyard during the summertime for us kids. He was also very supportive of me when I went to film school. So when I did this movie I got in touch with them — I hadn't seen Salah in 10 years. It took me about a month to talk them into coming on board, but they did the same mix for us that they would have done for a studio feature."

1998 Chicago Underground Film Festival

The Chicago Underground Film Festival is now accepting entries for its fifth annual festival to be held this August 12-16 at the Theatre Building in the Windy City. The event seeks the best cutting-edge, subversive, controversial and defiantly indie films and videos of all kinds — features, shorts, animation, documentary, experimental, 35mm, 16mm, Super 8 and video. Cash prizes are awarded to the best entry in each category. Each year an influential guest filmmaker is given the Jack Smith Lifetime Achievement Award; past recipients have included Richard Kern, Kenneth Anger, George Kuchar and John Waters. Deadline for entries is May 15. For an entry form write to CUFF, 2501 North Lincoln Blvd., Suite 278, Chicago, Illinois 60614 or send e-mail to info@cuff.org.

Filmmakers Night 1998

The New York City-based Camera Service Center (CSC) holds free educational seminars for filmmakers that consist of a brief lecture, an open discussion and a hands-on demonstration of new equipment. On March 12, Arriflex representatives will discuss the product development history of the 435es camera system. On April 16, there will be a demonstration of the Weaver-Steadman Digital Remote Head by its designer, Dale Schwartz. On May 14, Arri engineers will present the ARRI LoPro 35, a multi-purpose projection and video transfer system for location, studio and conference use. For more info contact CSC's marketing manager, Neil Bahnmann, at (212) 757-0906 ext. 245, or via e-mail at nbahnmann@cameraservice.co.

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Glory Cinematic

The American Society of
Cinematographers fetes legendary
English cinematographer/director
Freddie Francis, BSC
with its International Award.

by David E. Williams

One hallmark of a dedicated artist and true professional is the willingness to accept new challenges — an attribute that cinematographer/director Freddie Francis has exhibited throughout his continuing lifetime of work behind the camera. Indeed, his credits as a director of photography include such disparate films as *Time Without Pity*, *Room at the Top*, *Sons and Lovers* (which earned him the Academy and BSC Awards for Best Cinematography), *The Innocents*, *The Elephant Man* (which garnered Francis another BSC Award and a BAFTA nomination), *The Executioner's Song*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (BSC Award, BAFTA nomination), *Glory* (Academy and BSC Awards, BAFTA nomination), *The Man in the Moon* and the hair-raising 1991 remake of *Cape Fear* (another BAFTA nomination). Ever the experimenter, Francis recently completed a feature film shot in the Sony high-definition digital video format.

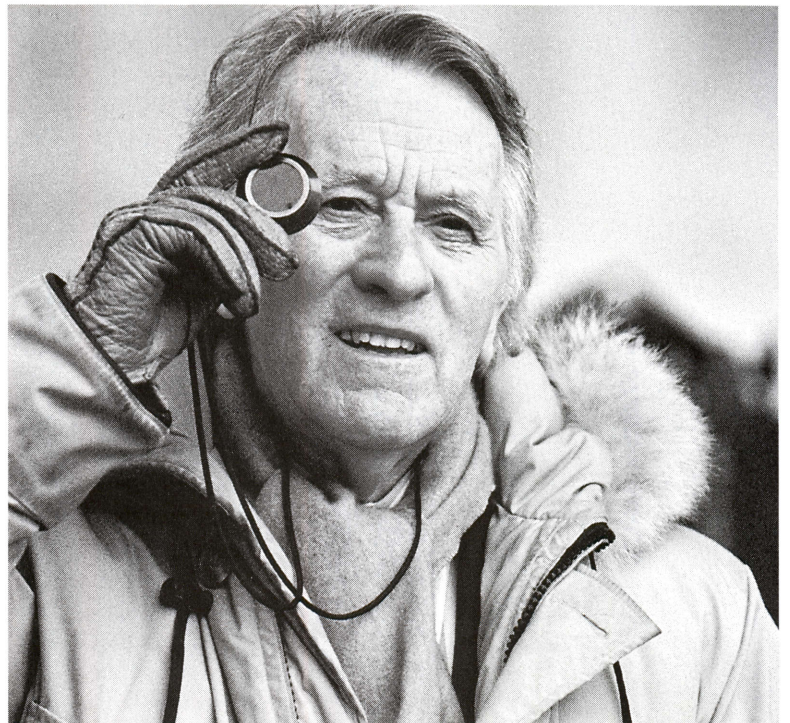
In recognition of Francis' outstanding contributions to cinema history, the American Society of Cinematographers will present him with its International Award at the organization's 12th annual awards gala, to be held on March 8 at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles.

Previous recipients of the honor are Gabriel Figueroa, Henri Alekan, Raoul Coutard and Francis' long-time friends and fellow BSC members Freddie Young and Jack Cardiff.

During the past year, Francis

Achievement Award (announced by Sir Sydney Samuelson and presented by Oswald Morris, BSC).

Several months ago, this reporter was warmly welcomed by Freddie and Pamela Francis at the couple's stylish home, located just



was additionally honored by the members of the British Society of Cinematographers, who saluted their esteemed peer with a Lifetime

outside of London. The cameraman smiled as he described his feelings about being the sixth recipient of the ASC's International Award. "It was



African-American Federal troops march into battle in *Glory* (1989). Director of photography Freddie Francis, BSC (opposite) earned his second Academy Award and numerous other honors for his outstanding work on the film.

[then ASC president] Owen Roizman who called to tell me about it, and I was absolutely thrilled," he said. "As a kid, I wanted nothing more than to be a part of the film business. I really looked up to the many talented members of the ASC, such as Gregg Toland. Over the years, I've visited the ASC several times and met many of the people I'd admired; to get this award *from* them is an absolute highlight in my career. In a way, it brings me closer to those who inspired me."

Roizman, a co-chairman of this year's ASC Awards committee, comments, "I think Freddie Francis is a perfect choice for the honor not only because of the diverse work he has done in both England and the United States, but because he is still a vital member of our profession. That says something about his artistry and his dedication to the craft of cinematography."

Committee member John Bailey, ASC recalls, "When I started

film school at USC in the mid-Sixties, there were two kinds of films that most of us went to see: the art-driven films made by people like Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni, and the guilty-pleasure films, which included Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns and — for me — the Hammer Studios horror films, a number of which were directed by Freddie Francis. He'd become a director at that point in his career, and he made quite a number of those films in a very short period of time for Hammer and a few other English studios. I remember how exciting and wonderful they were; while they had their B-movie roots, they were incredibly rich in their imagery, expressive, and fun to watch. They were often shot in Techniscope — a spherical, deep-focus widescreen process similar to Super 35 — and I recall how those pictures were as important to me as the films made by Antonioni, Bergman and François Truffaut.

"I'm very pleased that Freddie Francis is being given the ASC International Award for his considerable body of work as both a cinematographer and a director who had a very strong influence on a generation of American filmmakers — the film school brats of the 1960s!"

When asked how his long career began, Francis wryly responds, "As a young man, I was in love with actress Joan Blondell! Of course, she double-crossed me and married a cinematographer, George Barnes [ASC]. So I absolutely had to become a cameraman!"

Kidding aside, Francis notes that he had dabbled with still photography in his youth, but actually thought of becoming an engineer. "I had this romantic notion of building bridges across great rivers in remote countries, but in those days, the schools would have had in me in training to work in an ironmonger's shop," he recalls.

Francis was later assigned to

Cinematic Glory

write an essay on a personal interest. Fascinated by movies, he selected filmmaking as his subject and visited Gaumont British Studios for research purposes. "Apart from Joan Blondell, I got hooked on the whole thing right then and decided that filmmaking was what I really wanted to do," he says.



Above: Francis (top row, second from left) poses with his fellow foot soldiers while serving in the Army Kinematograph Services during World War II. Right: Francis oversees a setup while on location shooting *Room at the Top* in 1959.

Opposite: Leaning over a ladder, Francis watches as veteran actor Peter Cushing is menaced by an oversized cranium in *The Skull* (1965), one of Francis' many directorial efforts. With the camera placed to peer through the empty eyesockets, this particular setup created a distinctly creepy point of view!

After briefly apprenticing for a still photographer, Francis found work as a clapper boy at British and Dominion Studios, which primarily made "quota quickies" — low-budget productions financed by Paramount Pictures so that the American studio could gain access to the lucrative British market for their Hollywood-made films. He explains, "Paramount would spend as little money as possible on these horrible pictures, which we made on a 10- or 12-day schedule. Films were just a way to make money or find a job for your girlfriend, and then they were never shown anywhere other than the Plaza Theater in London, which was owned by Paramount! I think they were even screened in the morning when the theater was being cleaned — Paramount was just fulfilling their obligation.

"This might sound very anti-British, but filmmaking here was a joke in 1933 when I started out! Aside from Freddie Young and Alfred Hitchcock, there were very few people to learn from and emulate. But I was observant, so if I learned

anything about cinematography by working on these films, it was all from others' so-called mistakes! Regardless, it was good experience. A lot of good people came through those channels. In a way, our education was financed by the Americans."

Later, while working at Pinewood, Francis became a loader, a focus-puller, and then an operator for a short time before World War II engulfed England. Drafted into the army, he discovered that there was a stills and photographic unit. "They had a lot of equipment, but nobody knew how to use it," he remembers. "I got in there to become a one-man film unit for a while, making training films. Those in command later decided that movies could be used to boost morale, and established a professional film unit, the Army Kinematograph Services. Carol Reed, Thord Dickinson, Freddie Young and a lot of people of that standing were in it, and I joined them as well."

Francis' wartime pictures included *Maxillo Facial Surgery*, which detailed how front-line army doctors dealt with disfiguring wounds, and training films for anti-aircraft personnel — shot with infrared stock during actual air raids.

During the war, British film entered a renaissance period, as filmmakers such as David Lean, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger and others came to the fore. "The industry was in much better shape," Francis recounts, "and just two weeks after I was discharged in 1946, I was on my way to East Africa to do location work on *The Macomber Affair*, an American picture directed by Zoltan Korda and starring Gregory Peck and Joan Bennett."

Soon after, Korda took over British Lion Studios and Francis was placed under contract as a camera operator. He later operated for Christopher Challis, BSC on a several productions for director Michael Powell, including *The Small Back Room* and *Tales of Hoffmann*, and for

Oswald Morris on such films as *Moulin Rouge* and *Beat the Devil*, directed by John Huston. "I got along very well with John, and he gave me a very free hand as an operator," Francis says. "We did seven pictures together, but in 1955 I finally told him I had to start shooting on my own, so he brought me in as the second-unit cameraman on *Moby Dick* to shoot all of the miniatures and the whaling footage. After that, I was recommended to a couple of producers, and I did *A Hill in Korea* [1956], my first film as a director of photography."

After such successful "kitchen-sink dramas" as *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Francis' work began gaining notice, resulting in his next project. Based on D.H. Lawrence's autobiographical



novel and directed by famed cameraman Jack Cardiff, BSC, *Sons and Lovers* (1960) depicts societal repression in a small coal-mining town during the early 1900s, focusing on an artistically gifted young man (Dean Stockwell) whose romance with a young farm girl could doom him to a life in the mines.

While Cardiff earned an Oscar nomination for his efforts, Francis' CinemaScope camerawork bested the other nominees in the Best Black-and-White Cinematography category. As noted in the May 1961 issue

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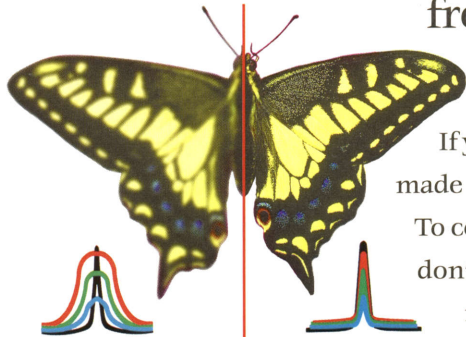
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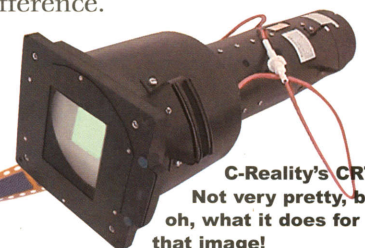
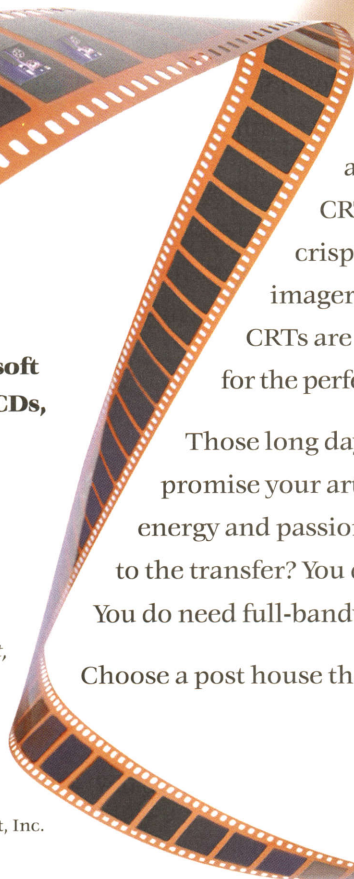
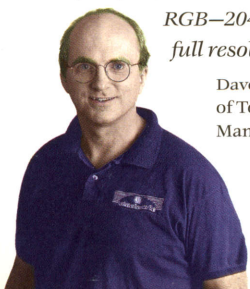
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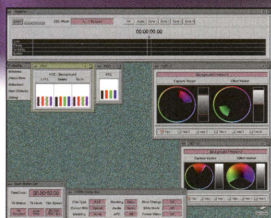
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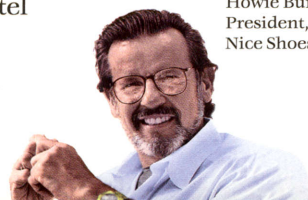
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of AC, the picture has "unusual visual beauty and is marked by photographic ingenuity throughout that easily makes it one of the finest monochrome photographic achievements to come along in some time."

Admirer John Bailey attests, "When I was just starting to become aware of the visual aspects of film-making — through such films as *La Dolce Vita* and *Wild Strawberries* — I actually thought that artful films *had* to be made in a foreign language. Then I saw *Sons and Lovers*, and I was knocked out by the poetry and visual beauty of the film. The camerawork was unlike anything I had seen before in an English-language movie."

The picture's widescreen frame effectively adds a momentous sweep to the landscapes surrounding the intimate drama. Perhaps taking cues from Gregg Toland's work on *Citizen Kane*, Francis deftly used deep-focus techniques with complex compositions to suggest the characters' shifting relationships and emotions — a feat made even more difficult by the day's slow anamorphic lenses. The stunning results were only possible though the use of Kodak's fast Tri-X stock.

Asked if he'd had any trepidation about shooting a picture for a distinguished cameraman such as Cardiff, Francis offers, "I had nothing to fear, because Jack had never shot a

black-and-white movie! He'd been an operator for many, many years, but he came to prominence though his work in Technicolor. And to his everlasting credit, I never had any interference from Jack on that film. He asked me to shoot the picture because he'd liked my camerawork on *Room at the Top*, so he knew I was up to the job."

Francis' subsequent production was *The Innocents*, based on author Henry James' thriller *The Turn of the Screw*. "That is one picture I'm still very happy with," the cinematographer says. "The director, Jack Clayton, was a very dear friend, and we had to overcome many technical hurdles during the project."

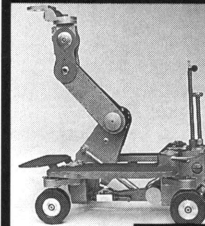
The film was made for 20th Century Fox, and the use of their proprietary CinemaScope process was mandatory. Francis recalls, "We only found out about that a few weeks before shooting started, following months of talking about how we were going to make the picture." The cinematographer found the 2.35:1 aspect ratio to be inappropriate, as the supernatural-themed story demanded a sense of entrapment. To help remedy the situation, he utilized graduated color filters (effectively used as neutral-density grads in monochrome) on both sides of the frame, which could be brought in and out during shots to concen-

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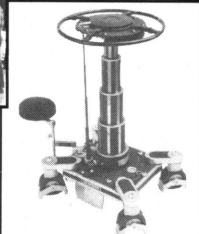
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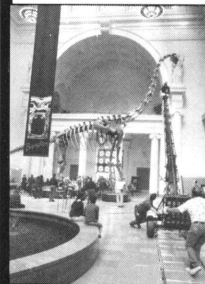


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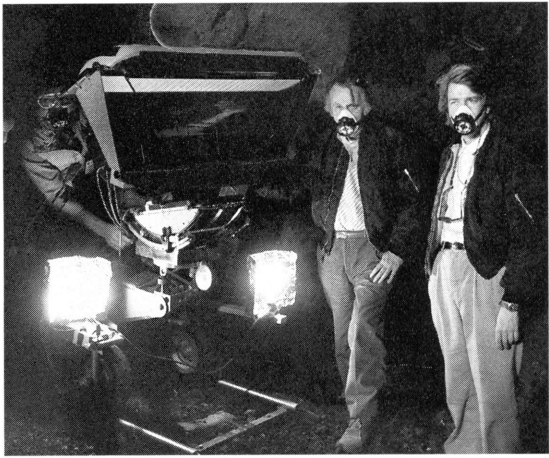
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Cinematic Glory



Above: Protected from dust particles, Francis and director David Lynch inspect an oversized Lightflex rig used for special effects work on *Dune* (1984).

Right: On location in Louisiana, director Robert Mulligan and Francis set up a shot of actors Jason London and Reese Witherspoon while shooting the period romance *The Man in the Moon* (1991). Opposite: Francis checks his light while filming *Cape Fear* (1991) with director Martin Scorsese in Miami.

trate viewers' attention on the center of the picture.

In addition, "CinemaScope lenses also couldn't focus very close, but Jack wanted the camera to be in tight with the actors. We had to use a lot of light to build up the stop and increase the depth of field. We had a huge garden set built on the stage at Shepperton Studios, and we couldn't get nearly enough light on it for the stops we wanted, so I had the art department paint one side of the foliage silver and white to create a false highlight. That way, our fill could be what our key would have been. We had to do all kinds of tricks like that."

Soon after shooting the Hammer Studios production *Never Take Sweets from a Stranger*, Francis took stock of his career as a cameraman. "There was a financial consideration there," he admits with a smile. "Cinematographers working in England didn't make a lot of money. Even after I won the first Academy Award, my fee wasn't that much, relatively speaking. You had to keep working all the time, and if you weren't careful, you'd end up working on films you didn't really want to do. After *Sons and Lovers*, people asked me if I wanted to direct, so I thought I'd try it. But my first film was a bit of a disaster."

Francis' directorial debut was the 1961 romantic comedy *Two and Two Make Six*. "I'd been promised

that I could change the script, but it didn't come off that way," he explains with a wry grin. "At the time, directors had to be approved by the National Film Finance Corporation, which put up the money for production. They'd approved me because of my reputation as a cameraman, but I knew that I'd never get another chance if I backed out of the picture."

The film was a box-office disappointment, but Francis' second feature, a thriller entitled *Vengeance*, was a success. He followed it by directing over 20 features in fewer than 20 years, primarily working for Hammer, Amicus and other British studios specializing in the horror genre. Richly atmospheric, a number of these modestly-budgeted films are now considered classics of their kind:



The Evil of Frankenstein (1964) features the seemingly undefeatable scientist vowing to continue his experiments; the anthology film *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (1965) offers five separate stories featuring a werewolf, a vampire, a man-eating plant, voodoo and an a disembodied hand; *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968) trails the infamous Count as he plots revenge.

Francis additionally helmed several features for Tyburn, an independent studio formed by his son Kevin. Not surprisingly, these and

Francis' many other genre credits earned him great admiration from horror fans, who still invite him to speak at conventions and revival screenings. He candidly remarks, "I enjoyed working at Hammer and the other studios, and I kept making one film after another just because I was having great fun — I didn't realize that they weren't very good films. Oddly, though, while I have some rather good credits as a cinematographer, I get more recognition than you can imagine for all of those ghastly horror movies!"

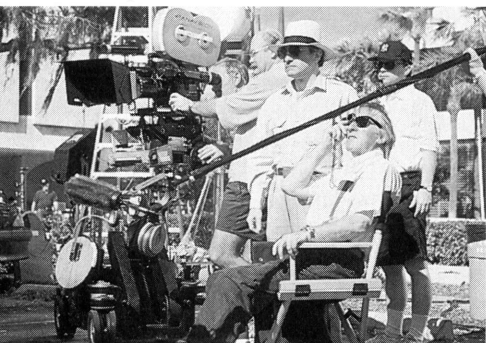
Asked how his experiences as a director reshaped his ideas about cinematography, Francis replies, "I won't work with a director unless I feel that I'm on his wavelength. The three or four weeks I need in preparation for a picture mainly consists of just talking to the director so I can understand what he wants. A director sometimes needs help. I've made wonderful films with directors who have never been in a film studio in their lives — they don't have to know *everything*. But others, like Robert Mulligan, with whom I worked on *Clara's Heart* and *The Man in the Moon*, are very knowledgeable and organized.

"The cinematographer is an executive of the production and has to run things for the director," he adds. "You also have to read his mind and then get that up on the screen, because any good director has already shot the picture in his head and can see those images. They can be improved, but they are there."

Francis' next major project would be a perfect example of this dynamic. In the mid-1970s, he took a creative sabbatical to concentrate on writing and developing new material, while also directing some television productions. But in 1979, he was enticed back into the realm of cinematography by director David Lynch and producer Jonathan Sanger.

Lynch had recently gained attention with his singularly unique

film *Eraserhead*. Impressed with the director's talents, satirist and horror aficionado Mel Brooks signed on to executive-produce Lynch's next film, *The Elephant Man*, based on the true story of John Merrick, a 19th-century Englishman afflicted with a disfiguring congenital disease. (Actor



John Hurt played the role, with the aid of astonishing special makeup work by Christopher Tucker.)

Brooks obtained permission from Paramount to shoot the Victorian-era film in anamorphic black-and-white. Creatively, it was an audacious move, as this combination of formats had not been utilized on a major film for more than a decade; Francis himself had not shot a black-and-white feature in 15 years. But Francis' work on *Sons and Lovers* had caught Lynch's eye, as the director later told AC: "The photography was about light and dark, and it had a mood. It had such a great look that it seemed only natural to hire Freddie."

The Elephant Man was principally shot at Wembley Studios in Panavision, utilizing Kodak's Plus X stock — the only monochrome emulsion which met Francis' standards and was available in sufficient quantities. Due to the dearth of black-and-white features, most of Britain's labs had let their processing equipment fall into disrepair, necessitating that the cinematographer do extensive tests with several facilities. Rank finally won the contract. Noted Francis in the informative tome *The British Cinematographer*, "Rank's processing produced a result which

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Cinematic Glory

Light and shadow interplay as Dr. Frederick Treves (Anthony Hopkins) reveals John Merrick's deformities in *The Elephant Man* (1980). Richly atmospheric, the picture was Francis' first as a cameraman after his many years of directing.



immediately filled me with confidence. My first impressions were that the [Plus X] had increased in speed and that the grain had diminished to such an extent as to be negligible... above all, it was a true black-and-white stock with every minute tone in between."

Despite this promise, Kodak's emulsion varied in sensitivity (increasing by a full stop at one point), and Rank had some problems in delivering the image quality that Francis demanded. However, as audiences would attest, the efforts paid off, resulting in an evocative film which retains a haunting, dreamlike textural quality while effectively rendering the gritty reality of the story and setting. "People gave me far more credit for that film than I deserved," Francis submits. "David knew what he wanted and I was able to show him how to get it."

"There was one shot that absolutely drove us mad though," the cinematographer remembers. "We were shooting in this old hospital, within a corridor that was about 60 yards long with gaslight fixtures running all the way down. In the shot, a nurse comes along and turns off the lamps one by one, with the hall gradually becoming darker. The obvious solution for the lighting was to use dimmers, but people hadn't used dimmers for a long time because in color photography they

change the color temperature of the light. Of course, we were shooting in black-and-white, so that didn't matter. We had to scrounge up all of these rusty old dimmer units. We needed a lot of them, and the noise they created was terrible!"

After a long absence, Francis was back at the forefront of his field, and subsequent productions would cement his reputation as one of cinematography's finest practitioners. One of these triumphs, Karel Reisz's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, consists of a film-within-a-film of a story set in 19th-century England. The period tale concerns a man who is engaged to be married but has a passionate affair with another woman, and the actors who portray the illicit lovers go through a relationship which parallels that of their characters.

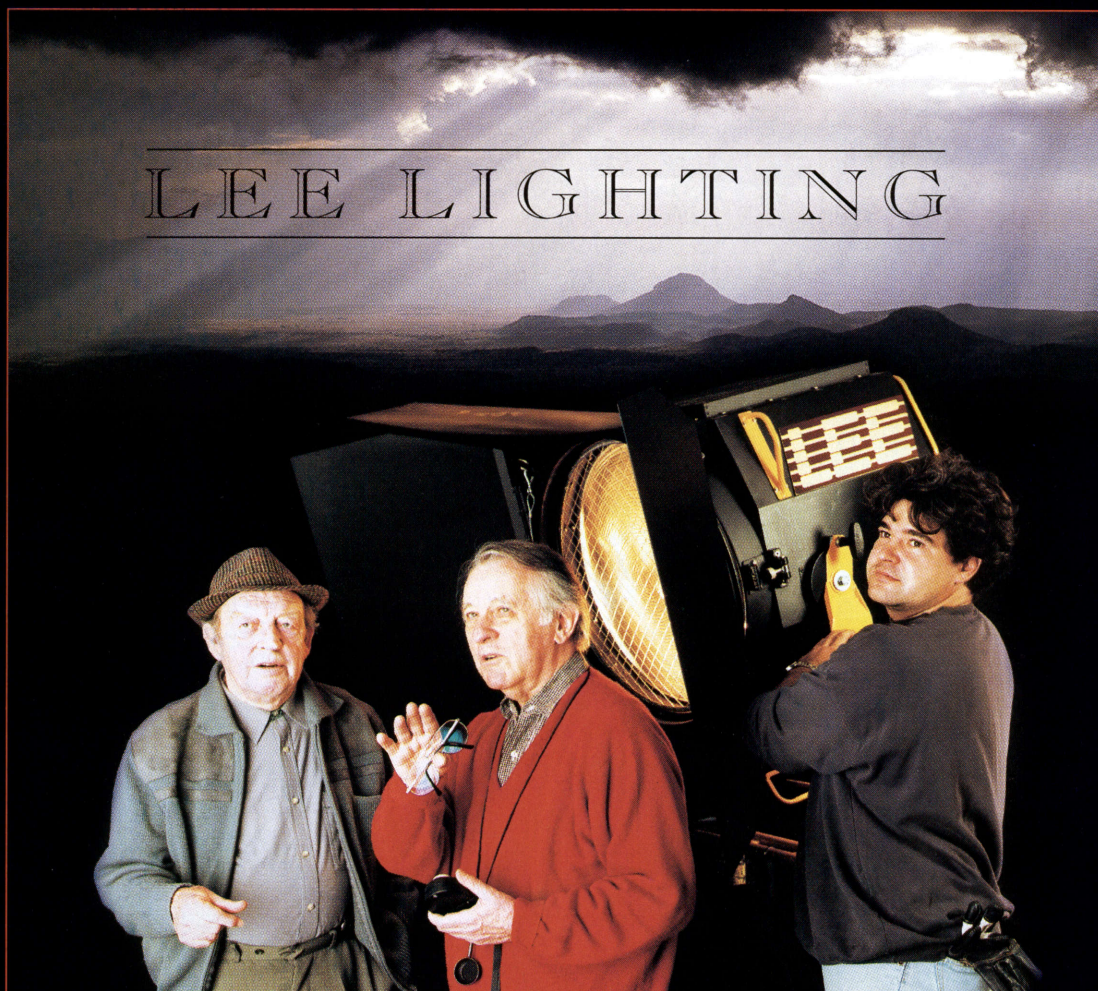
To help differentiate the picture's dual stories, which both starred Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep, Francis used a Lightflex to desaturate colors and decrease contrast in the film-within-film segments. The on-camera accessory was invented in 1972 by Gerry Turpin, BSC (who would later shoot one of Francis' last films as a director, *The Doctor and the Devils*, in 1985). The Lightflex consists primarily of an oversized filter-hood faced with optical glass. Dimmer-controlled quartz lamps built into the hood reflect into

the lens and overlay a controlled amount of light on the scene to be photographed at the time of exposure. The device can be used to adjust the gamma curve of the emulsion, and also extends its photometric range without affecting grain. Francis would come to regularly use the Lightflex, which became an integral part of his photographic process. This apparatus was later developed into the Arriflex VariCon. "I found the Lightflex to be an absolutely fantastic tool," the cameraman says. "After Arriflex bought and improved the design, Volker Bahnemann of Arri New York sent me one of my own. I don't think many people use them, except for students. They're always ringing and asking me if they can borrow mine!"

Francis collaborated with David Lynch again on *Dune* (AC Dec. '84). Based on the novel by Frank Herbert, the dark science-fiction fantasy is set in the far future, as a young man recognizes his inner spiritual power and leads an oppressed people against their enemies. The cinematographer recalls, "Because I had worked with David on *The Elephant Man*, we didn't have to discuss the lighting plans a great deal, since I knew the things he'd like. David *thinks* in black-and-white, so we went very low in key for color, though sometimes hardly as low as he'd have *liked* to go."

Featuring stunning photography and production design, *Dune* was shot in Todd-AO 35 over the course of a year at Mexico City's Churobusco Studios. Seeking to bring out background detail and desaturate colors to create a more monochromatic image, Francis again employed the Lightflex, which also helped the cinematographer determine his lighting approach for the production's many intricate sets and expansive locations. Utilizing the device's ability to open up shadows, Francis could effectively create a four-stop exposure range, even while

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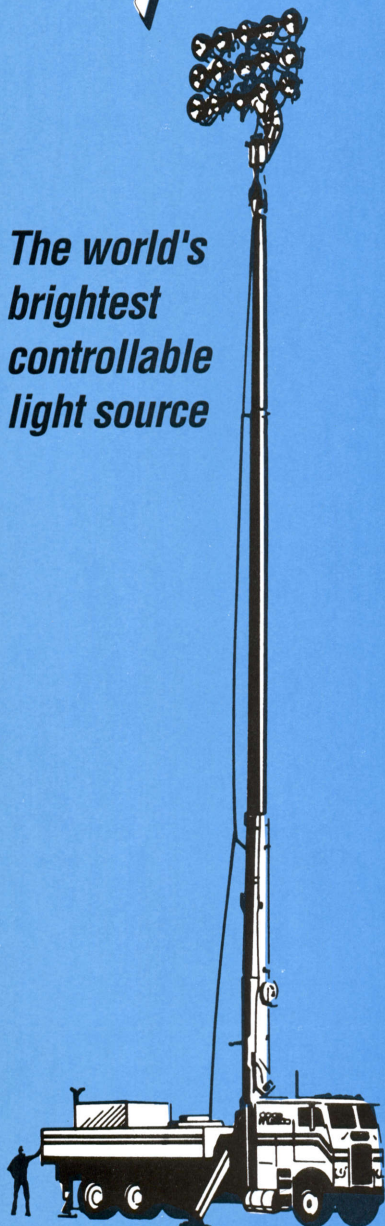
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Cinematic Glory

using the contrasty high-speed stocks available at the time. This allowed him to use far less fill light, yet shoot at deep stops. Additionally, he could tint scenes in the appropriate hues by inserting gels into the Lightflex's filter slot, an invaluable tool given the myriad worlds depicted in *Dune*.

However, the complicated production on the visual effects-heavy film was hardly to Francis' liking, since so much of the image-making process would be completed by others in post. "I don't care much for effects pictures," he admits. "But David and I had become close friends after *The Elephant Man*, and I did it because of that friendship."

The gripping Civil War drama *Glory* (AC Nov. '90) was based on the letters of Colonel Robert G. Shaw (portrayed in the film by Matthew Broderick), an officer in the Union Army who volunteered to lead the first company of black soldiers against the Confederate forces. Seeking an authentic feel for this historical story, Francis and director Edward Zwick studied period stills by famed photographer Matthew Brady and others. The stark black-and-white images suggested a realistic approach devoid of filtration or sepia tones, relying instead on the credibility of the locations and production design to simulate the era. Photographically, Francis rendered *Glory* simply and honestly, with much of the intimate drama revealed in the light and shadow playing upon soldiers' faces.

During the film's conclusion, Shaw and his troops engage in a fateful nighttime battle, which the production staged on the beaches of Jekyll Island, located off the coast of Georgia. Twin Muscos were set hundreds of yards away to create a soft overall ambiance, while assorted pyrotechnic and lightning effects dramatically lit the landscape. The extreme contrast was dampened with the Lightflex, which addition-

ally allowed Francis to shoot at higher stops. The added depth of field allowed the camera to clearly record the human drama. "I'm a great believer in the futility of war," the cinematographer says, "and I believe we captured that idea quite well in several parts of *Glory*. That was always in the back of my mind."

Earning the Academy Award for this picture made Francis one of the few cinematographers to have won for both black-and-white and color work.

Francis later shot the remake of *Cape Fear* for director Martin Scorsese (AC Oct. '91), who had specifically sought out the cinematographer due to his well-established ability to create a sense of Gothic atmosphere. However, the cameraman has another theory as well: "Scorsese was a good friend of Michael Powell's toward the end of his life. Micky was a fan of mine, and I've sure he put in a good word for me."

Shooting the picture in Panavision anamorphic, Francis again sought to utilize deep focus in order to keep the audience anxiously searching the frame for the psychopathic Max Cady (Robert De Niro), who frequently lurked in the shadows. "The only problem we had on that film was in getting quality lenses," he says. "Nobody had shot in anamorphic for years and years, but when we started that picture, *everybody* suddenly wanted to do it! It was very difficult to get good lenses.

"Scorsese is another director who has shot the film in his head before you've exposed a single frame of film," Francis remarks. "You can sometimes talk him into something, though. There was one scene with Bob De Niro where he's talking on the phone, hanging upside-down from a bar strung across a doorway. I suggested that we start the shot upside down, tight on his face, and then rotate the camera as we tracked backwards so the room would become upside-down. We did that

shot with a Panatate remote head, and Marty just fell madly in love with the thing."

The film's harrowing climax, a brutal fight set aboard an out-of-control houseboat drifting down the Cape Fear river in the midst of a storm, was shot in a specially built studio tank facility. The Panatate was often employed to create violently twisting and rolling camera moves that enhanced both the fight's visceral impact and the storm's fury. "We used it so often that I told Marty, 'If I could afford it, I'd buy you one of these for your birthday!'" Francis says with a hearty chuckle.

Looking back on his career, Francis ponders the technological changes that have been made since his start in the 1930s. Scoffing at the notion that cinematography is an inherently technical field, he offers, "If someone says to me, 'I loved that shot, how did you light it?', I'll think they've lost the point. My explanation doesn't mean a thing because there are 20 ways to light a shot and get the same result. *Why* you do something is far more important than *how*. The cinematographer is a storyteller, and his main job is to communicate with the director and get his ideas on the screen. I just always insist on having a wonderful operator and wonderful gaffer. I can tell them what I have in my mind and they'll know what to do, with me just adding a few touches later."

Again evincing a grin, Francis concludes, "There are no rules and there is no formula to filling the frame to please everybody. I've got this corny saying though: 'There are three types of photography: good photography, bad photography and the *right* photography. The right photography is what tells the story best." ■

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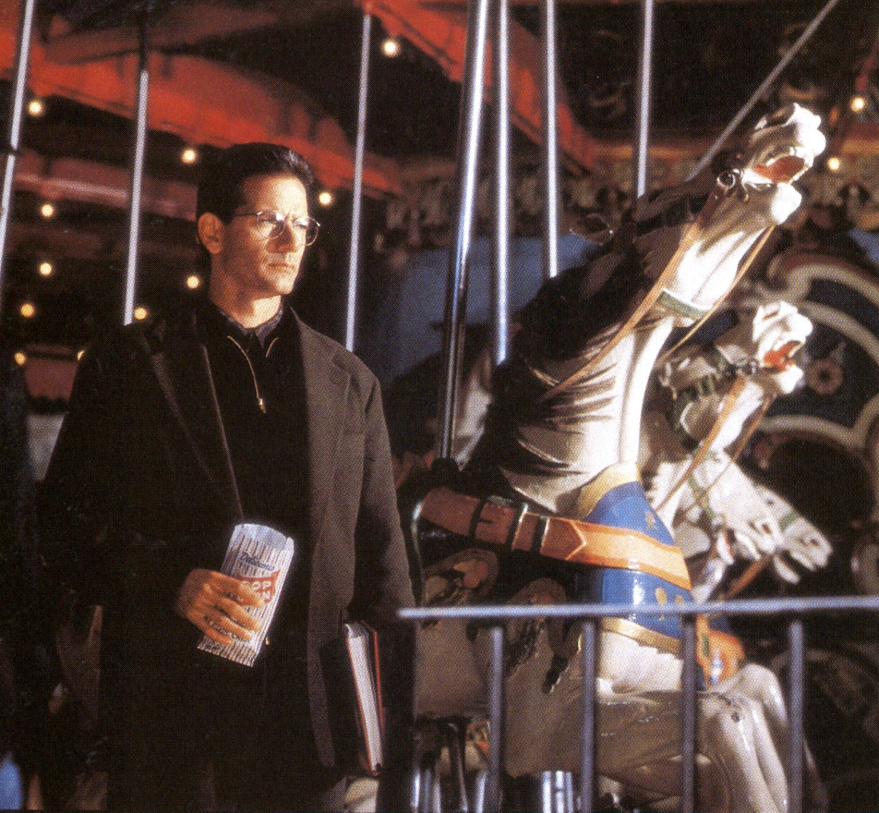
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A corporate game of cat and mouse unfurls in writer/director David Mamet's *The Spanish Prisoner*, a twist-laden tale artfully photographed by cinematographer Gabriel Beristain, BSC.

by Eric Rudolph

Photography by James Bridges

Part Hitchcockian thriller and part shaggy-dog story, *The Spanish Prisoner* offers a suspenseful and entertaining ride into a world where almost none of the characters is what he appears to be. Written and directed by renowned multi-hyphenate David Mamet (*House of Games*, *Oleanna*), *Prisoner* also benefits from the supple photography of Gabriel Beristain, BSC (*Dolores Claiborne*, *Caravaggio*), whose imagery lends this twist-filled tale a mood of menace and uncertainty.

The picture's plot is pure film noir: Joe Ross (Campbell Scott), a dedicated young scientist who has single-handedly created a process that will earn his employers a fortune, is frustrated by the vague promises of financial remuneration offered by his boss, the evasive Mr. Klein (Ben Gazzara). A rich, mysterious acquaintance named Jimmy Dell (Steve Martin, in a rare dramatic turn) suggests that Ross may be legally entitled to a much greater share of the wealth, and offers to help. The wealthy advisor insists on a clandestine meeting, however, instructing the scientist to bring the only copy of the secret process to this cloak-and-dagger rendezvous.

The Spanish Prisoner was shot in 36 12-hour days on a budget of approximately \$10 million with no studio affiliation. Beristain says that

Photos courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics.

Paging Machiavelli

creating the film's distinctive look on such a schedule would have been impossible if he and Mamet hadn't been in such close agreement about the visual approach to the material. "Usually when you have such a short schedule, you either shoot the film like television or you sacrifice coverage," he says, "but we did not want *The Spanish Prisoner* to look like a poor independent picture. Thanks to the intense level of communication David and I had, as well as to a good crew and actors who understood the importance of the lighting in making their characters more effective, we were able to make the film look



moody and menacing without sacrificing the coverage we needed."

According to Beristain, Mamet the director is a cinematographer's dream. "David understands the role of the camera and lighting," he says. "He feels, I believe, that the camera and the lighting are non-speaking characters in his films. So we had a director who appreciates the importance of lighting and the camera, and a cinematographer who believes strongly in the drama and the story, which seems to be a very good match. Without the communion

David and I had, we could not have shot five to six pages a day."

Mamet chose Beristain primarily because of the cinematographer's exceptional work on director Taylor Hackford's *Dolores Claiborne*. "I think that's one of the most wonderfully photographed movies of recent times," says Mamet. "And when I met Gaby, I was extraordinarily charmed and won-over. He has such a brilliant intelligence, coupled with almost courtly manners. I thought, 'I'll probably have a good time working with him.' In fact, I had a great time and I learned a lot as well."

Beristain, the son of actor Luis Beristain (best known for his role in the 1962 Luis Buñuel classic *The Exterminating Angel*), was part of a prominent Mexican guerrilla film movement in the late Sixties. "I was a long-haired kid with a Bolex," he quips. He learned every aspect of filmmaking from that experience, but was frustrated by the tightly controlled Mexican film industry.

Famed director Sergio Leone advised Beristain to move to an English-speaking country so he could learn the language and further his career. Beristain chose England, and enrolled at the National Film School. While his English improved, he felt that it was not good enough for him to pursue a career as a director or screenwriter, so he opted for his current career path.

During his scholastic years, Beristain shot the Oscar-winning 1984 student film *Mother's Wedding*, directed by Jenny Wilkes. He later served as an assistant to major cinematographers such as Billy Williams, BSC before moving up to the top slot himself. Beristain subsequently won the Silver Bear at the 1987 Berlin Film Festival for his work on Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio*.

Beristain is known for using a one-light source look, an approach he also employed on *The Spanish Prisoner*. "It is the way I lit when I worked in Europe, and also the way I worked on *Dolores Claiborne*," he

notes. "I try to use the greatest economy of lights and flags. I like to use one light source through a window or door, supplemented with a tiny bit of fill indoors, and then try to choreograph the scene with the director so that we play the light."

Of course, Beristain has also had some experience at the other end of the lighting spectrum. "Ironically, my most complicated lighting has been in comedies [which include Jonathan Lynn's recent films *Trial and Error* and *The Distinguished Gentleman*]. In comedy, you have to be very careful not to do a very flat-looking film, yet you don't want to lose the nice moments with the eyes on the jokes. You set one light and that leads to another and another, and suddenly you have a tree of lights and flags. When you are doing a film with a personal artistic look, like *The Spanish Prisoner*, it is easier to use one light source. It's riskier, but if you have the director's cooperation, such an approach can be very rewarding."

The danger of a one-light source technique stems from the fact that the style requires actors to hit very narrow and precise lighting marks. "As a cinematographer, you have to be very confident and persuasive to convince your director and actors that the results will be worth all of the extra effort," Beristain comments. "When an actor has done five takes and still has not delivered a perfect performance, he or she is probably going to blame the problems on your restrictive lighting marks."

Fortunately, on *The Spanish Prisoner*, "We didn't have selfish actors, the type who will say, 'You find me with the light.' I was very lucky, because we had tremendously gifted actors such as Campbell Scott, Ben Gazzara and Steve Martin, all of whom understood the lighting and did a great job of playing the light. I would guess that Steve Martin had never worked with as many lighting marks as he did on *The Spanish Prisoner*, but he used the opportunity

Opposite:
Inventor Joe Ross (Campbell Scott) arrives for a clandestine meeting with the FBI. Director of photography Gabriel Beristain, BSC (left) utilized lights shining through the whirling carousel to add a sense of confusion to the scene.

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to say something with the light.”

Thanks to the commitment of the actors and director to Beristain's lighting plans, the one-light source

of a con game within a con game. The film is mostly set in New York and Boston, and its title refers to an ancient scam which echoes in the

Klein and a group of potential investors. The company has gone to the fictitious tropical isle of St. Estephe for a day of meetings about this revolutionary creation.

The meeting scene was shot in an actual conference room at a Florida Keys resort, where the tropical daylight streamed into the room from one side through large windows covered with wooden louvered shades. To recreate the room's look on film, two powerful HMIs were placed outside the louvered windows of the practical location; the strong, direct light they generated was then controlled to a great degree by the careful manipulation of the louvers themselves. Beristain recalls, “I was playing with the louvers, opening and closing them to throw the light in the way I wanted, and I removed some louvers to allow more light in certain places. We had two smaller HMIs inside the room to model a bookcase and a trophy case, but otherwise we only used foamcore boards to bounce and model the light for the close-ups. It was a dramatic yet extremely simple lighting scheme.”

Going somewhat against the expected casual look of a business meeting set in a tropical vacation environment, Beristain tried to create the subtle sense that the men watching the presentation by Ross and Lang were representatives of the old guard — conservative barons of money and power. “We wanted to subconsciously create the feeling that these people were like the old formal portraits on the wall of a bank, the people you never see who really run things,” he relates. “The scene is shot with great formality; none of the characters are seen moving very much, and the shots of Klein and the investors are brief. You get only glimpses of these people, so there is a sense of things being hidden. Some of the investors are shot in profile only, and no one ever looks anyone in the eyes. There is a also lot of



Shafts of sunlight cut into the gloom of a tense meeting between Ross and his nefarious boss, Mr. Klein (Ben Gazzara). Beristain strategically placed HMIs outside the location's windows to supplement the hot Florida sunshine, then manipulated the built-in wooden shutters to create piercing beams.

approach, often coupled with a clever choice of film stock, simplified many of Beristain's lighting setups and helped *The Spanish Prisoner* hew to its tight schedule. “There were scenes where I wanted a little more fill than normal, but I knew that setting up fill lights would be too time-consuming. Instead, I would switch to Eastman Kodak's Vision 320T 5277 stock, because it has a bit more detail in the shadows, which eliminated the need for the fill. Having tested the 320T extensively, I knew I would be sacrificing contrast with that stock, but because I was using the one-light approach, I also knew I would have more contrast in the actual nature of the scene. So in some respects, our time limitations actually helped the look of the film.” Beristain also used Eastman Kodak's EXR 5245, 5248, 5293 and Vision 500T 5279 stocks as conditions warranted.

Anyone who has seen Mamet's *House of Games* will correctly expect *The Spanish Prisoner* to tell the story

plot. Beristain's lighting played a key part in keeping all of the story's balls in the air. Beristain explains, “The lighting of the people around the hero, Joe Ross, works to reinforce the ideas we want the audience to have about them. Characters who are perceived by Ross as his enemies are treated with slightly ominous lighting, and those he perceives as allies are given more flattering lighting. However, few people in this film are really who they seem to be. We used the lighting to help us play the game presented by the very clever script that David Mamet had written, to deceive the audience and keep them uncertain about who is a friend and who is an enemy.”

The filmmakers' distinctive approach to the material is evident in a key early scene, when Ross and his friend, company attorney Lang (played by professional card sharp and Mamet mainstay Ricky Jay) present the latest good news about Ross' mysterious new process to



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Right: Suspects are questioned at the police station, where Beristain created multiple levels of "hostile" lighting to represent Ross' descent into darkness. Bottom: HMI sources augment natural light during the presentation sequence.



chiaroscuro [lighting]."

Ross is later told by his mysterious and wealthy new friend, Jimmy Dell, that without a solid written agreement, his employers will not pay him anything other than his salary, if even that. The inventor is subsequently suddenly called into a meeting with his boss and some company lawyers, who ask him to revalidate his employment agreement. Sensing that he is being asked to formally agree that he is entitled to no special compensation, Ross becomes indignant and says he will not sign until his attorney reviews the agreement. He then storms out of the room.

"What can you do in a scene in an office between four people?" Beristain asks rhetorically. "We started with the idea that we would again avoid frontal shots and eye contact, to convey a sense of how ominous this situation is for the hero—that the lawyers are trying to deny the hero his due."

The office interiors had a claustrophobic feel due to the location's small, high-set windows, which presented the cinematographer with a choice. "With these strange windows, you could either block them off and avoid getting them in the frame, or use them," he says. "I thought we should use them, so we placed HMIs outside of the windows. As in the conference room



"The Spanish Prisoner is an attempt to embrace the Hitchcockian form of the light or romantic thriller."

— writer/director David Mamet

scene, these HMIs became our key lights."

As a result of this unusual lighting, the scene has an off-kilter feel, and the room is full of pitch-dark pockets. The cinematographer offers, "In that office set there were places where I could not put any lights, [which led to] gigantic gaps of darkness. We tried, where possible, to use darkness in this film the way a playwright might use silence, where

the lack of words says something very important. I've always believed that sometimes lighting, as opposed to illumination, is more about subtracting light."

Given this offbeat lighting scheme, the actors again rose to the challenge. "There are moments where Campbell Scott is in almost complete darkness," Beristain notes. "Then he steps out of the shadows and delivers a powerful line. One of those moments is actually a turning point for his character, where he goes from being pushed around to standing up

for himself. He steps out of the darkness and into the light and says, 'How dare you, after what I've done for the company?' He challenges his boss for the first time."

Afterward, when Ross finally realizes that Dell may not be all that he appears to be, he springs into action. Passing by a secretary's desk in his office, he retrieves the business card of an FBI agent he met briefly during the tropical retreat. The room's paranoid atmosphere is enhanced by some clever production design; the space is festooned with archaic wartime posters bearing bold legends like "Someone talked!" Ross' suspicions motivate him to find a private place from which to phone the FBI, and he opts for a darkroom

lit only by a red photographic safelight. Mamet explains that this setting, and its unusual lighting, came about because "it made sense that at the point where Ross' world begins to completely fall apart, everything suddenly turns red, the color of danger."

From that point, Ross moves on to a fateful rendezvous in Central Park, where he is working with the FBI to entrap Dell. The meeting is set for the park's famous carousel, an homage to the climax of Hitchcock's 1951 suspense classic *Strangers on a Train*. Given its circular shape, the enclosed carousel presented a formidable lighting challenge that was used to the story's advantage. "The scene where Ross actually gets on the moving carousel was meant to underscore his confusion," says Beristain. "We had a light shining through every gap and every window in the carousel's enclosure, which helped us to create a feeling of confusion. We could not get any lighting direction that way, because it was all crosslight and flare and backlight, then darkness and strong frontlight, then sidelight. It helped to communicate the utter confusion in the mind of the character about just what is what and who is who in this nightmare."

"Of course, because we were doing [a continuous] shot, we ran the risk of seeing some of our lights [in the frame], but David and I talked about it and decided that no one would notice the lights unless they were really looking for them," the cinematographer adds.

After Ross is duped into letting the only copy of the process out of his hands, he goes to the police, who immediately question the veracity of his story. Ross soon finds himself in the familiar Hitchcockian situation of the good man falsely accused of terrible wrongdoing. Creating the provocative lighting for the various rooms and corridors of the police station, Beristain says, was "like being

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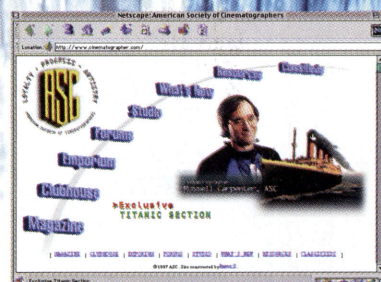
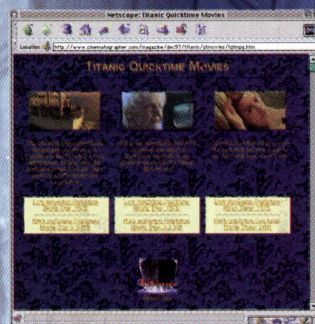
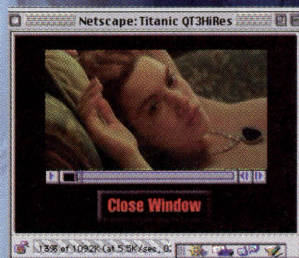
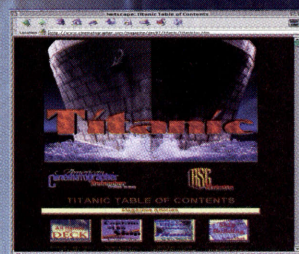
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Ericson Core after shooting
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Ross contemplates his fate at the office. Beristain utilized pools of light and large patches of darkness in the workplace setting to suggest discomfort and treachery.

in a playground. We wanted a intensely hostile and scary environment, but we didn't want to go with the typical fluorescent lighting and Steadicam approach that is so often used in that type of setting. We decided to make each room in the police station look worse than the previous one. It's like Dante's *Inferno*; each place seems like it must be the worst, but it turns out to only be purgatory, and you keep going deeper and deeper into the gloom."

The filmmakers succeeded in creating a dreadfully dingy, dark and dungeon-like space. As Ross is led from a stark, dreary interrogation room and down a crowded, murky hallway, we see the wildly exaggerated shadow of a security gate playing ominously against one wall. At the end of the hall is a room we cannot see clearly, but the doorway resembles the side view of a particularly unpleasant, sickly yellow, scummy aquarium. This area was actually a holding cell set, where Ross was placed in a scene that was shot but not used in the film. In the finished movie, the purpose of this strange, discomforting area is left up to the viewer's imagination, making it all the more effective.

At this point, the already edgy film takes an even grimmer turn.

"We were preparing the terrain for when Ross arrives at the apartment of his best friend Lang, which is the ultimate dark moment," says Beristain. "There is almost no light in Lang's apartment at all — just a slit of light coming from the bathroom and, briefly, a bit coming in the window from a car passing by. Suddenly Ross sees something in a mirror, so he grabs a small lamp and turns it directly on his friend, and that light starkly reveals just how much trouble our hero is in. It is the darkest place in the story from a dramatic point of view; it is where the nightmare *really* starts."

For this scene, where a cloak of darkness was crucial to the surprise plot twist, Beristain abandoned the one-light source approach, using small, closely placed instruments to selectively accent his dark canvas. "I would have been placing flags all day to get the room dark enough to use the one-light approach," he says. "Instead, I used 100- to 300-watt Peppers on dimmers to point the precise amount of light exactly where I needed it."

This teasingly underlit scene is the last such image in *The Spanish Prisoner*, however. Running counter to genre conventions, most of the rest of the film takes place during an



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overcast day. Elaborating on his choice of a daylight ending, Mamet submits, "*The Spanish Prisoner* is an attempt to embrace the Hitchcockian form of the light or romantic thriller. One of the things Hitchcock did time and time again was to set the final confrontation between good and evil in a place where one wouldn't think people would get into trouble, a place where help

would not be available. I decided to place the denouement of *The Spanish Prisoner* on a nearly empty moving water ferry. Many of these scenes in Hitchcock's films occur in daylight; it simply never occurred to me to set it at night."

While the lighting in *The Spanish Prisoner* is unconventional, Beristain's choice of optics was not. He did not want his lenses to

telegraph anything about the characters. "We used 40mm through 75mm lenses for close-ups. We had thought about using 200mm and 300mm lenses for a lot of the close-ups, but we were afraid that might provide clues about the characters' true natures. If you use a very wide or very long lens on a character, the audience knows that something is up with that person. We wanted the audience to be as unsure as the hero was."

The cinematographer's use of filtration was minimal, consisting mainly of soft graduated neutral-density filters to bring down bright skies, and polarizers for the tropical skies. Beristain did use a selection of corals and color-compensating filters to help him deal with shifting location color temperatures. He adds, "I also had the gaffer read my HMIs with a color temperature meter constantly, and write the results of the readings on a sticker placed on the lights, so I always knew exactly what kind of light they would produce, no matter how old the bulbs were. We knew that we would not have the luxury of 25 color timing runs on our small budget. Besides, it is silly to spend hours timing one shot to match when this can be done on the set with a little extra effort."

The cinematographer's A-camera was a Platinum Panaflex; Beristain says that he would have preferred to use multiple-camera setups, but the budget didn't allow it. He also tested a bleach-bypass process, but it was determined that a special process would complicate production of the low-budget film. "We decided to keep things simple and straightforward," he states.

Beristain jokes that he would always like to work with "six Platinum Panaflex cameras fitted only with Primos, shooting on [100 ASA] 5248, but one doesn't get that luxury very often. Besides," he concludes, "I love the challenge of making the most out of the tools at hand." ■

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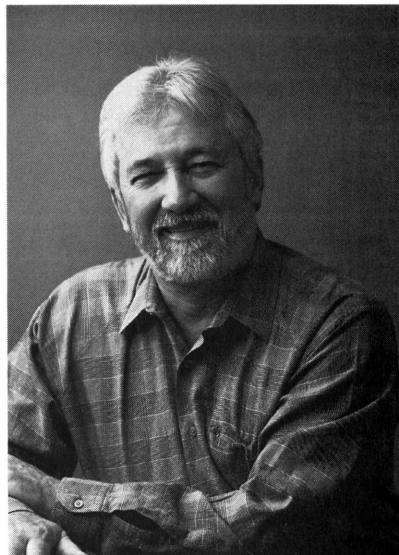
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absolutely sure it met the factory specs — that it was *as good as new*. If the numbers weren’t right, we could fine-tune that lens until they *were* right — or we could send it back to Zeiss.”

Our numbers

“Our lenses from the other makers could be MTF tested, too. Many didn’t come with factory numbers, so we’d buy several new sets at once and test them all together. We kept records of all those new-lens MTF numbers and we used them to arrive at a standard for that type of lens. From then on, every lens of that type had to meet (or exceed) that standard when we put it on the MTF machine at each routine servicing after every shoot.”

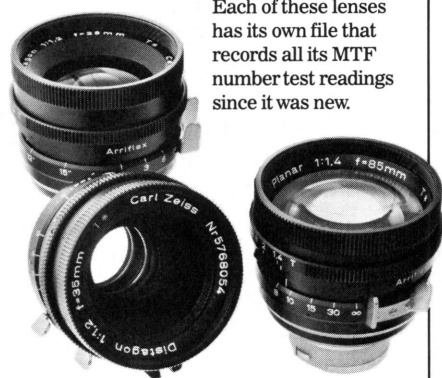
“Every lens in our inventory has its own file. If a prime lens doesn’t meet the MTF standard, we look at the file for that lens, to see what its MTF numbers were when it was new and to look at its repair records. Before we take it apart to work on it, its current numbers at various T stops are entered on our Test Report form, with the date and serial number. After working

More details in Part Two:

In another article in this series, we go into greater detail on what MTF tests tell us and how they tie in with the other ways we test lenses. And how that helps *your* work to look its best.

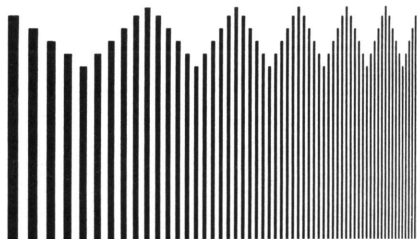
on the lens, we check its MTF numbers again and we write *those* numbers in the Test Report.”

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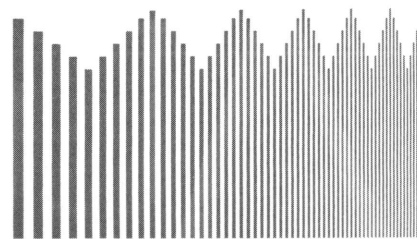


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“Zeiss designed the machine for spherical, fixed lenses up to 350mm. But by working with two numbers (one for horizontal, one for vertical), we’ve learned to test our anamorphic lenses, too. Some of the ARRI anamorphics are physically too big for this machine. However, we’re hoping they’ll fit onto the new MTF machine we’re now working on — for zoom lenses.”



Printed here, these pictures can’t really show a gray image. They represent images made by two lenses with equal resolution. Lens at left:



high contrast. Lens at right: lower contrast. It modulates black/white edges less well. As they get closer together, its image becomes gray.

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After the bar-pattern images from the slit pass through the lens, they’re read by a microdensitometer — light, dark, light, dark. They’re then converted into voltage signals. Contrast is always higher with an in-focus image, of course. Here, higher contrast gives us a stronger voltage signal. The machine goes through the focus until it gets an identical voltage reading from the two patterns because the point of focus is between them.

If you draw it as a graph, the point of best focus (and highest contrast)

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Aluminous Afterglow

Director Alan Rudolph and cinematographer Toyomichi Kurita reunite to film a provocative story of spouse-swapping couples.

by Ron Magid

Photography by Joyce Rudolph

The films of Alan Rudolph, the director of such offbeat indie hits as *Welcome to L.A.*, *Choose Me* and *Equinox* (see AC April '93) are distinctive for their unusual rhythms, stream-of-consciousness flow and raw emotionality. It's not surprising, then, that a gut feeling led Rudolph to embark upon a relationship with cinematographer Toyomichi Kurita, who lent his skills to the director's latest effort, *Afterglow*.

The seeds of this partnership were sown back in 1984, when Rudolph was looking for someone to shoot his bizarre futuristic film noir picture *Trouble in Mind*. "I always like to move people up [the production ladder] because you can't buy that kind of enthusiasm, and they haven't learned any bad habits yet," Rudolph says. "While looking for a cameraman, I called John Bailey [ASC], a terrific director of photography whom I hadn't spoken to for years, and he said, 'Well, the best operator I know is Toyomichi Kurita. He worked with me on *Mishima*, but he's in Japan and he never comes to America.' An hour later, John called me back — it was our second phone call in maybe five years — and said, 'You'll never believe this: Toyomichi's in town for one day.' So we met at some coffee shop and Toyomichi kept looking at John as if he was an interpreter, even though John doesn't speak Japanese. I said, 'Toyomichi, do



Photos courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics.

you want to shoot the film?' He just looked at John, who said, 'Oh, Alan always talks like that,' but I said, 'No, I'm serious, you want to do it? I can shoot a film myself if I have no cameraman; it would look terrible, so anything above that is just a bonus.' I think in some ways he was disappointed that it was so easy; he was a bit like one of my actors that way, because I don't audition, read or test. *Trouble in Mind* had a budget of under \$3 million, and Toyomichi hadn't shot any 35mm features before, but I loved his face."

Kurita, whose English has improved considerably since that auspicious day, confirms Rudolph's account. "He told me later that he just looked at my face and that was it," the cinematographer says with a laugh. "I think Alan saw the short film I did when I was at the American Film Institute. To my surprise, he told me I would be the photographer for *Trouble in Mind*. I had seen *Choose Me*, which I really liked, so I was very excited. We shot in Seattle, where I live now. Alan has a very distinctive way of working, a very stylized way of making movies. I don't think many people would understand what he's trying to do right away, but I somehow did. That was the first film I worked on as a director of photography."

It wasn't the last. Kurita's stylized photography on *Trouble in Mind* earned him a 1986 Independent Spirit Award. He then went on to shoot commercials, documentaries and several features, including *Powwow Highway*, before reteaming with Rudolph on *The Moderns*, the director's stylized look at the 1920s Parisian art scene. "On that film," says Rudolph, "I think Toyomichi broke new ground in terms of his artistry." Kurita later lent his skills to the features *A Rage In Harlem* and *Waiting to Exhale*, as well as a number of television movies for cable. He heard from Rudolph again when it was time to crew up for *Afterglow*. "I love working with people more than



once, because you get into the finer sensibilities," Rudolph says. "It's like working with actors: one kiss is never enough for that type of romance."

Although *Trouble in Mind*, *The Moderns* and *Afterglow* are all Rudolph-Kurita collaborations, they offer distinctly different visual styles. Kurita's influences on *Trouble in Mind* were film noir and artist Edward Hopper's colored neon cityscapes, while *The Moderns* was a period piece informed by its setting — Paris in the Twenties — and the Cubist style of painter David Hockney. The look of *Afterglow*, on the other hand, defies definition because it doesn't fit neatly into a genre. "It's not a conventional, linear story," Kurita agrees. "It's ambiguous and multi-focal, so as a photographer, I tried to capture its layers with the camera and lighting."

As they had on *The Moderns*, Rudolph and Kurita shot *Afterglow* in Montreal. This time, however, the film was actually set in the contemporary capital of Quebec. The story

is a bittersweet fable about two married couples — one older, one younger — who inadvertently switch partners. The catalyst for this sexual swap is Lucky (Nick Nolte), a handyman with a penchant for bedding his lonely female customers. The fireworks begin when Lucky is hired to build a nursery by Marianne (Lara Flynn Boyle), an upscale yuppie who tracks her fertility cycles while her husband, a corporate climber named Jeffrey (Jonny Lee Miller), tracks the stock market. Soon enough, Jeffrey and Lucky's wife, Phyllis (Julie Christie), begin to harbor suspicions about their respective mates. They separately trail the unfaithful couple to a bar, only to discover each other instead. "Audiences have to surrender to the story, which seems to be the case with all of my films," Rudolph says. "If you resist, you might as well leave during the fade-in."

Kurita's camerawork in *Afterglow* could be described as predatory. Like the work of famed Italian director Luchino Visconti

Opposite: Shooting actors Jonny Lee Miller and Lara Flynn Boyle on the apartment set's stairs. Seeking to cool the overall warmth of the young couple's abode, Rudolph and Kurita (above, plotting their frame) relied on production designer François Seguin to incorporate reflective glass and metal surfaces into the architecture.

A Luminous *Afterglow*

(*The Damned*, *Death in Venice*), Rudolph's cinematic style is predicated almost entirely on pans and zooms, which lend a fine, delicate

actually learned to stop worrying and love the zoom: "When I started assisting on films, most of the cameramen said to avoid using the

"The actors, of course, know that from the first take, and they know we won't pull the rug out from under them. Most of the time we don't even cover," Rudolph says proudly. "There are four or five shots in *Afterglow*, maybe more, that are as long as six or seven minutes — which is usually the case in my films. But in today's cut-per-second, high-tech world, that type [of composition] is almost radical, because it really is built on the rhythms of behavior."

These shots are also incredibly hard on zoom motors. "I warned the camera assistant, 'Listen, by the third day, you're going to have to get a new zoom motor,'" Rudolph says with a chuckle. "When he asked why, I said, 'You'll see.' It's not even like you can see the zoom moving; we just put it on the low dial and it creeps. Finally, the inventor of the motor we were using came to visit, and he said to us, 'What is with you guys?' He gave us some space-age model that he'd invented, the latest thing, and he couldn't believe it when we burned that out too. I said, 'Look, if I were Spielberg or someone people paid attention to, you might invent something to accommodate the way I shoot.' Instead, I just kept burning out zoom motors, which I always do."

While the zoom enabled Rudolph to create more sustained performances, the long takes made great demands on Kurita's photographic crew. The cinematographer says, "I think that approach worked for the actors, but in the end, we were dealing with a long lens, the focus was difficult and the dolly grip had to be hitting preset marks. All of those factors had to [work together], so it became very complicated for everyone around the camera. It was almost like dancing with the actors."

Rudolph's zoom-laden style also limited the type of film stocks Kurita could use. "Zooms require more light than prime lenses, so it was a challenge to make those shots look natural under our lights," Kurita



Phyllis (Julie Christie) and Lucky (Nick Nolte) feel their romance wane. Kurita used soft tungsten units in their house to add further contrast between the couples.

and voyeuristic quality to his films, but tend to obscure the technical artistry involved in their making. "It's a naked movie, based totally on emotion," Rudolph says. "The acting is luminous, and it's such an unpyrotechnic film that people appreciate the camerawork, but they don't know how to articulate it. This film is an invisible triumph, because we didn't want any specific, designed look. I have a friend, a producer who knows his stuff, who said to me, 'Oh, *Afterglow* is so beautiful, but it didn't look as if it was very difficult to shoot.' I told him, 'Boy, you just contradicted yourself. Are you kidding me? Did you like the way people looked?' He said, 'Oh, they looked great,' and I replied, 'Do you know how hard it is to have people look good while the camera's moving and they're moving? You haven't learned anything in all these years!'"

Of course, that task becomes even tougher when the lens of choice is invariably a zoom, but Kurita has

"My favorite statistic about *Afterglow* is that the whole film was made for less than Nick Nolte's regular Hollywood salary."
— director Alan Rudolph

zoom. But since then, the Cooke lenses have become very good. I developed an idea of how to use the zoom with Alan, and I started learning certain choreographed movements. The zoom can tell the story — though maybe not conventionally — by following the actors around. In the end, it can get into their faces very tightly and reveal their expressions and their eyes. Alan likes that, and I do as well."

Rudolph's films are characterized by emotions and mood. His style of long takes, composed of pans and zooms, allows audiences to experience performances that are not built from cut to cut, but which progress during the course of a shot.

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A Luminous *Afterglow*

Kurita casts a knowing eye toward Rudolph, perhaps anticipating the need for a complex shot covering pages of dialogue.



says. "While we were shooting night exteriors with the zoom lens, I used Kodak's 500-ASA Vision stock, 5279, which was very nice. For the day exteriors I used some EXR 5248, but mostly I shot on a combination of 48 and EXR 5293. I also used 93 mainly on this film's interiors. It's 200 ASA, which worked well with the zoom."

On previous films, Rudolph has been loathe to abandon his pan-and-zoom style. "That's all I have," he admits, "but this was the first show where I actually had a couple of technical ideas that we had to accommodate early. It's really funny: for so long, I've felt like an ostrich, and I've been happy. I've gotten used to a

sand diet, and I only ask for the basic requirements. I say, 'Listen, I need dollies, I need the camera that the cameraman chooses. I don't care if it's Arri or Panavision, they're both good, and I need a 5:1 and a 10:1 zoom.' I don't even need any hard lenses except on rare occasions. I know I can never budget for cranes or anything big."

Somehow, Rudolph managed to score not one but two pieces of high-tech equipment to realize his ideas for *Afterglow*. One of his concepts was to begin certain shots at normal speed and then dramatically slow them down or speed them up. To achieve that, Rudolph needed an Arriflex 535, but only one was available in Montreal. "We wanted to play with the speed control," Kurita explains. "The 535 is a computer-controlled camera that allows you to control the frames per second in the shot and the f-stop exposure at the

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same time. That's one of the new technologies that allowed us to express some things we couldn't do before."

The 535 executed this technique most memorably when Marianne rebelliously hangs her paintings up in her apartment. Actress Lara Flynn Boyle's actions begin at 24 frames, then speed up to a velocity reminiscent of the *Keystone Cops* before returning to normal. "That was actually one whole continuous shot that Alan edited a bit," Kurita says. "We started at 24 fps and gradually went down to 6 fps and then back to 24 fps."

Adds Rudolph with a laugh, "The whole purpose of getting the Arri 535 was so we could do the *opposite* and go from regular speed to slow. There was this long dolly shot that was supposed to shift to slow motion over the course of the shot, but the camera stopped every time! The location was between this

building — either a power company or some big telecommunications center — and the radio waves affected the computer in the camera, so we never got to do that shot, even though the 535 was specifically used for that one moment. I said, 'This is why I make no plans — God keeps laughing at us.'"

Rudolph fared better with another high-tech toy: a Scorpio II remote head, which enabled the camera to perform a 360-degree rotation around the nodal point of the lens, lending the feeling that the world was turning upside-down. "We did this twisted thing where the camera revolves around Jonny Lee Miller a couple of times," Rudolph says. "Again, it's always [a device jury-rigged in the vein of] Rube Goldberg. It's not that we can say, 'Oh, just get that thing that they use.' It's more like, 'Does anybody have an idea of how we can do this?' Someone in Montreal knew of this

odd head that existed, and there's actually a funny snapshot somebody took the first time we tried to use the Scorpio: the head literally came in a box, and you can see the whole crew standing around reading the instructions. We absolutely invented how to use it. We had it sitting on the truck because it was basically free, and whenever we pulled it out, we got progressively better at it. Now that I've come up out of the sand for a bit of air, I realize that there's so much technology that I'll never even appreciate, because I'll rarely — if ever — be able to afford it and I have no idea what it is. Give me the basics, that's all I ask."

Despite his anti-technology stance, Rudolph masterminded a startling opening shot for *Afterglow* using the Scorpio. The camera begins on Jonny Lee Miller in the back of a car sitting in traffic, revolves 360 degrees, and then turns to follow the car as it pulls away.

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A Luminous *Afterglow*

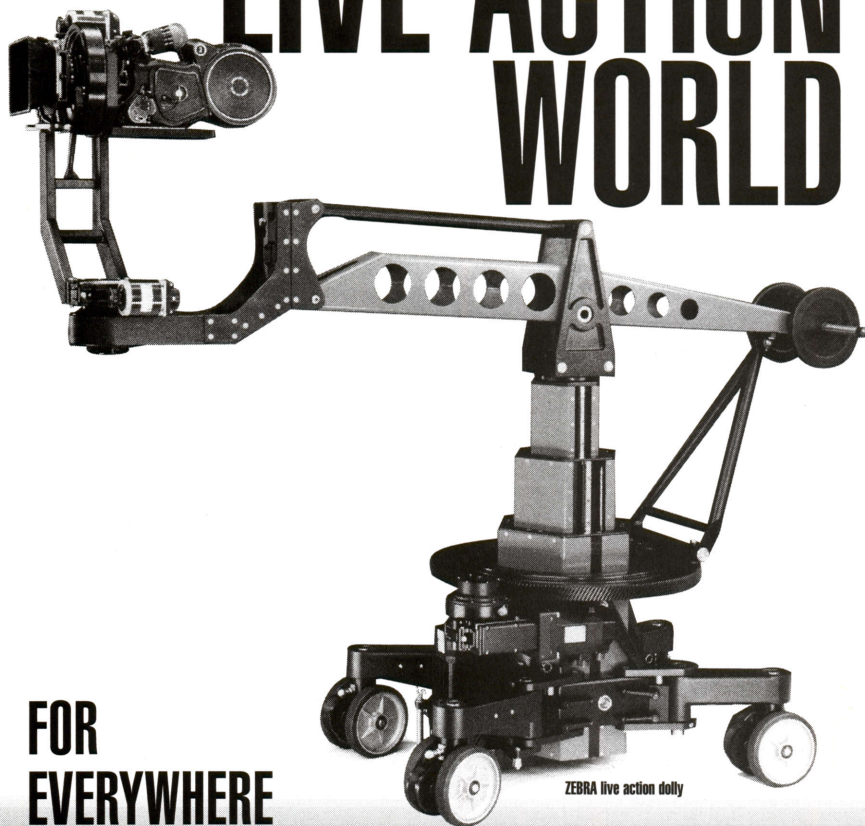
What makes the shot so special is that we expect the shot of Miller turning upside-down to be done in one cut, followed by another shot of the car driving away. True to form, however, Rudolph doesn't cut there; we see other cars passing by, and realize that the camera's standing in the midst of traffic.

Though Rudolph's films may not cost much, such a shot does

much to remove the low-budget feel, while also pulling the audience right into the action. "It's not just acrobatic, it draws you into the drama going on," Kurita agrees. "I don't want to explain everything we do, but that shot was inspired by the fact that the character is in a situation where his life is upside-down. The camera was on a dolly on a track, and I operated the Scorpio head from a

video monitor. I also had to balance the interior of the car with the outside light; we had to see the characters inside the car at first, yet we had to see the whole car by the end of the shot, so where was I going to hide my key? I could just barely hide a daylight-balanced Kino Flo tube in a little tiny space on the ceiling of the car. You can see the fluorescence in the shot, but because of the reflection

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Bathed in warm amber tones, Lucky and Phyllis have a romantic reunion at the Ritz Carlton Hotel bar.

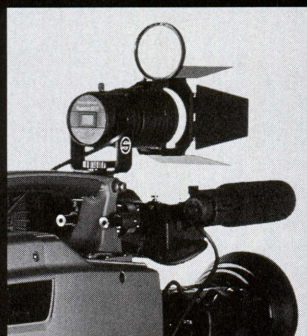
of the sky in the car window, it almost disappears."

Afterglow's most complex interior was the cavernous two-story apartment shared by Jeffrey and Marianne, which production designer François Seguin (*Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, *Love and Human Remains*) built within the ultra-chic Habitat complex originally constructed for Expo '67 in Montreal. "We did a lot of pre-rigging, because it was our big set and we knew we were going to be there for eight days," Rudolph recalls. "The main accomplishment in this film, given all the restrictions, was the apartment. It looks so natural that it's deceptive, and that's the difficulty."

Kurita offers, "Because it was a two-story apartment, the set was built pretty much wall-to-wall and up to the ceiling, and used up all the space of the stage. My biggest problem was figuring out where to put the lights. I managed to hang some lamps right up against the ceiling,

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A Luminous *Afterglow*

just out of frame. The sunlight coming through the windows was created with 20Ks, but we were limited by the TransLight backing, which was a bit closer to the windows than I would have liked.”

Despite the fact that the walls of the apartment are red intermixed with warm, natural wood, Jeffrey and Marianne’s home has a barren chilliness which mirrors their child-

less existence; this austere veneer was achieved through a combination of production design and cinematography. “Because of the characters, we wanted to feel some coldness,” says Kurita. “That interesting contrast came from the use of certain building materials and textures, and a combination of lights overhead and on the floor. François used glass and reflecting material, like the stainless

steel in the kitchen, and wood panels on the wall punctuated with bright metal. To create the reflections, I used theatrical spotlight fixtures to create a harsh, sharper light.

“Everything ran on dimmers, including the studio lights hanging from the rafters, along with some practicals around the set. I also had some floor lights out of frame — 2K and 5K Arri Fresnels coming through some 216 diffusion — and some softer 2Ks and 4Ks bouncing off the surfaces. I also hid some Kino Flos between the furniture for fill.”

In one virtuoso shot, Jeffrey returns home after work to find Marianne waiting for him in a slinky new nightgown. Much to his wife’s chagrin, he strides right past her. Notes Rudolph, “We take them into the kitchen and whatnot, but nobody notices that it’s a single shot, which is terrific,” notes Rudolph. “Shots like that get designed by the clock — I’ll look at my watch and think, ‘Oh, Christ, we’ve got to finish this pretty quick! Okay, we’re going to do it in one shot!’ Everybody says that you can shoot a lot faster if you break up the action, but I know that as soon as you cut that camera, it will be half an hour before it starts again. We were right on the edge of a lot of technical issues in terms of getting the shot or not, but I just love those kinds of challenges.”

Of course, this type of extended take can also drive a cinematographer crazy, “but that makes it more interesting,” says the game Kurita. “In the scene, Lara Flynn Boyle and Jonny Lee Miller are arguing and walking through the apartment. We followed them all the way through with a Steadicam. You could see the whole set, so we had to find a way to carry our lights through the corridor with the Steadicam operator. We used four banks of 2’ Kino Flo tubes, and my best boy and I handled the lights during the shot. I usually operate the camera myself, but since it was a Steadicam shot, I



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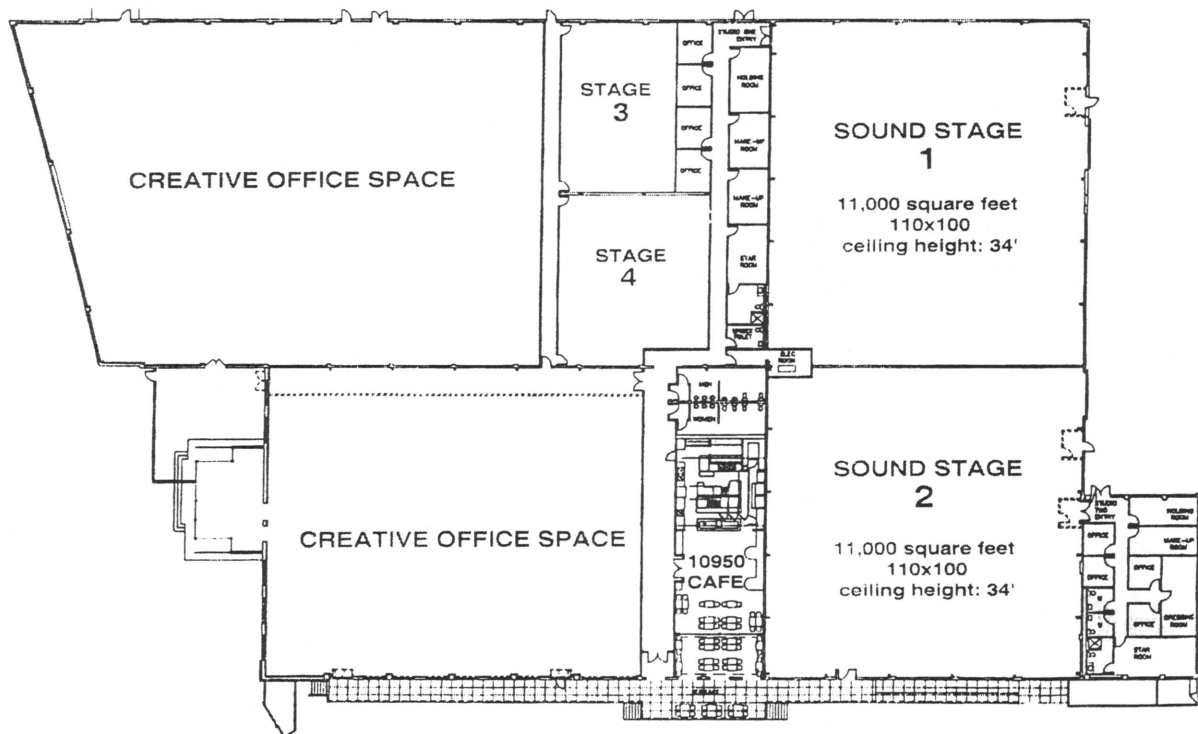
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used a Steadicam operator."

While Marianne and Jeffrey's modernistic apartment was bathed in cold, hard light, Rudolph sought a completely different look for the home of Lucky and Phyllis. Kurita and his crew created a tone and temperature which gave the older, estranged couple's environment a somewhat cozier feel. The cameraman comments, "I hope that those two locations at least reflect the different characters' personalities. While our designer built the apartment on a stage, the house was an existing practical location. Lighting-wise, the apartment had more of an artificial style, but Lucky's house was much more naturalistic. The main difference [between the two] was that we generally used soft tungsten light [at Lucky's place]."

Of course, lighting restrictions were much tighter in the tiny practical location — "especially working with Alan, because the actors go everywhere," Kurita notes. "I had to figure out where we were going to put the lights and make it look nice, especially for Julie Christie. I also had to hide my Kino Flos, paper lanterns and soft lights because that house was very small with limited space. Yet we still needed some kind of directional light so that it didn't go flat."

Rudolph adds, "Those rooms were small, but Toyomichi found a way to bring their essence out." In fact, the director credits Kurita with creating "my favorite film moment that I've ever been involved with." During the scene in question, Phyllis decides to make love with her husband after some six years of abstinence, but it turns out that Lucky is too exhausted after splashing around in a Jacuzzi with the youthful Marianne. In *Afterglow's* most naked emotional moment, Phyllis leaps on Lucky, pummeling him with her fists in rage and frustration. "It's a simple shot photographically," Rudolph admits, "yet Toyomichi found a way to make it legit. We did it in one take,

and it has a certain amount of grace because we didn't do much else. I find those types of moments to be the most exhilarating."

The film's third key setting — a tiny bar at Montreal's Ritz Carlton Hotel — was perhaps the most confining. "We were in there for three days," Kurita says. "I replaced all of the lights on top of the bar with our Kino Flos, and used a lot of 2K zip lights, paper lanterns and Kino Flos to light Julie Christie. I gave those scenes a warmer amber tone, and although I created that effect in the timing rather than using gels, I ended up using straight tungsten lights."

The action and shifting moods — from deft reveals to a barroom brawl between Lucky and Jeffrey — are captured through Kurita's prowling, zooming camerawork, which constantly emphasizes the spatial relationships between the characters as their paths collide in the watering hole. All of the movement made lighting a real dilemma, but Kurita overcame the problem by using dimmable paper lanterns to raise and lower light levels on the actors as they moved through the space. The cinematographer recalls, "This dimming wasn't done between shots, but *during* each single take, because Alan likes movement. When certain shots required moving the actors and the camera, the paper lanterns became a good tool that I could hide behind furniture and then control as necessary. A lamp could be the keylight at the beginning of a shot, and then become the fill as we moved."

One of *Afterglow's* more intense moments occurs in the bar, when Marianne, fresh from a feverish lovemaking session at her apartment, kisses Lucky passionately. The camera zooms between them and into a dark corner, revealing Phyllis sitting in a booth with her back to them; she's reflected in a mirror, inscrutably watching from behind dark glasses. The image's

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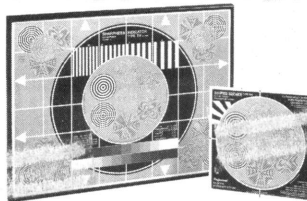
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A Luminous Afterglow

power stems from its very simplicity. "The zoom worked from a story standpoint," Kurita maintains. "That was a very difficult situation. Julie had to be hiding in the shadows in a corner of the room, reflected in a mirror at the back of the bar, but I still wanted her to be lit nicely. That shot was lit primarily with Kino Flos. We also played with the mirror, which made for an interesting scene."

In keeping with the film's title, Rudolph encouraged Kurita to endow his images with a certain luminance. "Toyomichi came up with a special color to represent that feeling," Rudolph recalls. "When the sun is gone in that climate at that time of year, the sky takes on a funny violet-purplish-magenta glow, and we said, 'That's our color.' We put a little bit of that in every scene when we wanted to. We even hit it right over the head when Julie says 'after-glow.' We were in the bar doing a close-up on her, and Toyomichi had this little gelled light that he brought up on a dimmer so the shot would get closer to that color."

Kurita is currently shooting Shirley MacLaine's directorial debut, *Bruno*, while Rudolph is preparing his adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's wry novel *Breakfast of Champions*. In a final reflection on their *Afterglow* collaboration, Rudolph concludes, "Toyomichi and I have never had any kind of wiggling room [on our projects], and perhaps we never will. On this film, we got started at the last minute, as always, because of the financing and because Julie Christie had still not agreed to be in the film. That's always the case with my films, since they're so low-budget. My favorite statistic about *Afterglow* is that the whole film cost less than Nick Nolte's regular Hollywood salary." ■

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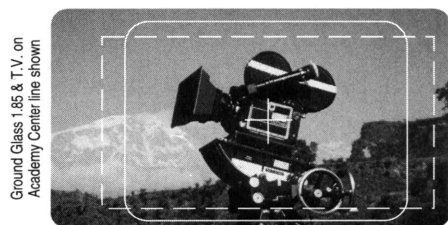
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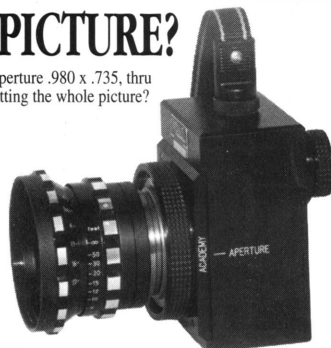
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Cooking Up Comedy

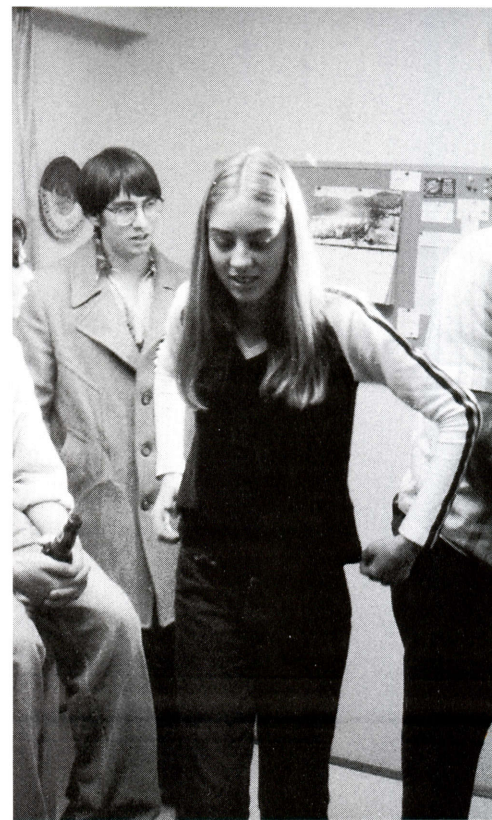
Cramped quarters help to inspire a distinctive look for *Kitchen Party*, a Canadian indie effort that pokes fun at the generation gap.

by David E. Williams

Photography by Clint Adam Smyth

Shot over 17 days on locations in suburban British Columbia, *Kitchen Party* is an unusually effective comedy photographed by Robert Aschmann for writer/director Gary Burns. The film made its debut at the 1997 Toronto Film Festival and recently opened the upstart Slamdance Film Festival here in the United States.

Many modern adolescents will find familiarity with this tale: Mom and Dad have gone off for an evening of cocktails at a neighbor's house, leaving their offspring free to indulge in some clandestine, beer-fueled festivities of their own. However, in a budget-conscious plot twist, Mom's anal-retentive housekeeping rituals demand that the youths confine their frolicking to the kitchen — so as to not muss her Zen garden-like home of perfectly-groomed carpets and immaculate furnishings. As the alcohol flows, Burns crosscuts between the two respective parties, effectively



exploring several crevices in the 1990s generation gap.

The story and its situations “were based partially on my own experiences as a kid,” says Burns, a graduate of the film program at Montreal's Concordia University whose low-budget debut feature, *The Suburbanators*, was profiled in the March 1995 issue of AC. “We used to

go over to friends' houses after school, and although we'd have access to the whole house, it was just a lot easier to clean up if the party stayed in the kitchen. We could be out of there in five minutes if necessary. I just took that idea a little further for the film."

Kitchen Party was partially funded by the B.C. Film Board (a provincial government financing agency), which dictated that local talent should fill key production jobs. After reviewing several reels, Burns selected cinematographer Bob Aschmann to shoot the film. "He was the coolest guy I met," the director

lighting, which was right for what I really wanted."

A native of Switzerland, Aschmann studied filmmaking at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. He had previously worked as an assistant to a fashion photographer in his homeland and ended up lighting and shooting many of his classmates' productions. After graduation, he continued photographing shorts and later entered IATSE as a camera assistant. "My initial reaction to the *Kitchen Party* script was 'I don't know what the hell this film is supposed to look like,'" Aschmann says with a laugh. "I

confesses. "I never have big ideas for camera movement or anything flashy with the photography. I generally go for a more realistic look. But while writing the script, the thing I was most concerned about was trying to develop as much audience interest as I could while working in a very enclosed space, and create a sense that it was part of a larger world. I didn't want to shoot the kitchen sequences on a set; that would have been the easiest way to go, since we could have designed it with flyaway walls, but I wanted to look outside the windows and see things beyond just that room. I wanted to see people

Director of photography Robert Aschmann (third from left) observes the effect of his lighting while writer/director Gary Burns (far right, in cap) goes over some final details. Overhead banks of Kino Flos offered nearly universal lighting, supplemented by soft sources used to fill faces and bring out eyes.



says with a laugh. "There's so much filming going on in B.C. right now that it's hard to get a crew together. Being a small production, we could not match the rates that other shows could pay, so everybody we got was basically lifted up a position. Bob had only shot one feature before, but I'd seen a short film he'd done and it was very naturalistic, particularly in the

liked the story, but from a visual standpoint I was left really empty-handed. It was very dialogue-driven and didn't have a lot of visual cues for me to work with. But then Gary and I had a couple very successful meetings and I started to understand where he was coming from."

"Visually speaking, I don't think very elaborately," Burns

as they approached up the sidewalk. With our budget, we had to use a real house.

"For these scenes, I also never wanted the camera to leave the kitchen, which of course made it difficult for shooting. It would have been easy to shoot from the living room or hallway back into the kitchen, but I wanted the camera to



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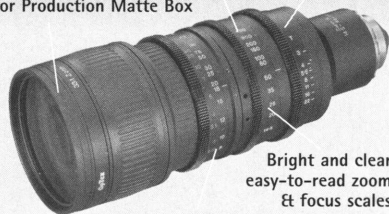
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essentially be another character. The kids couldn't leave the kitchen, so neither could the camera. We're talking about a really small space — around 10' by 20' — so it became quite difficult. We put the stove and fridge on wheels, which allowed us to move them easily. There was also a countertop that divided the room in half, and we put that on wheels as well so we could control the space a bit more. But we never had the entire cast in the room at once, since the camera and crew would take up half of it on any given setup."

As for the lighting in the kitchen, Burns says, "I always imagined the kitchen to be somewhat cool blue and uncomfortable, while the adjacent living room would be slightly warm. Even though the furnishings in [the living room] weren't really what one might desire in a home, they still seemed more comfortable and enticing [than the kitchen]. Because of the time restraints, I also didn't want to have any standing lamps; we didn't have luxury to rig and relight for every shot. This served as the basis for the discussions I had with Bob."

"There were pros and cons to shooting so much of the picture in such a small space, and it was daunting at first," says Aschmann, who estimates that some 60 percent of *Kitchen Party* takes place in the titular room. "The obvious con is that you have no space to work in, but on the pro side, you can concentrate on one room — and if it looks good, you've got a lot of the film covered."

"Aside from space and the schedule, the lighting was dictated by several things. Some were the visual references that Gary and I used in our discussions, which included contemporary still photography, such as the Calvin Klein ads you see in fashion magazines; they usually have fairly bright yet soft highlights. Another thing Gary felt strongly about was seeing the eye color of the kids. He felt there was a feeling of

identity in the shades of eye color and wanted detail in all of the faces, but especially in the eyes. He wanted to see a sense of innocence and life in there. For the nighttime scenes set in the kitchen, that meant I needed to use big, high-key, soft sources.

"To begin, we painted the kitchen, changing it from a sort of off-white to a cyan blue that would really offset the warmth of the living room. That way we didn't have to use gels to get the cool look Gary wanted. A lot of the costumes were then selected to contrast that again, with orange shirts and such.

"Knowing that a lot of kitchens have overhead fluorescent panels, we exaggerated that idea and built our own light box which we could use as a practical source. It held eight 8' Kino Flo tubes and pretty much took care of the overall ambient lighting, but didn't quite give Gary the 360 degrees of lighting he wanted, so we still had to set some key lighting, especially to bring out the eyes. To get fill lighting in the faces, there was a small Kino Flo mounted on the camera, which also gave us a reflection of the light in the actors' eyes.

"The fluorescents worked interestingly with the costumes. We worked closely with the costume designer and did some tests. In terms of colors and textures, the costume choices had a lot to do with the overall blue color of the kitchen, and at times they popped out and created almost a Technicolor sort of look. Texture is one thing I look for in clothing, to see how it will catch highlights and work as a visual reference in the frame, but one pleasant side effect of contemporary fabrics is that they have a reflective quality that gives off a modern-looking sheen.

"To offset the living room, we used some warming gels on the lights to add to the color-temperature difference. After replacing the bulbs in any practical fixtures, we added maybe 1/4 or 1/2 CTO on top of any

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Cooking Up Comedy

correction.”

Aschmann used Eastman Kodak's discontinued 250 ASA daylight-balanced 5297 stock for all

ing to the actors as well.

“For the daylight sequences, the depth was partially dictated by where I could set my lights and the



The refrigerator, stove and counter were mounted on wheels, allowing the camera greater access in the tight location.

of his daylight scenes, and 500 ASA EXR 5298 for nighttime sequences. Processing was done at Gastown Film Labs in Vancouver, which provided him with 3/4” video dailies. The cinematographer concedes that working with video dailies was a frustrating experience, but notes that timing and printing the picture at Gastown was a good decision. He adds that color timer Dana Neville did an “outstanding” job.

The kitchen scenes are notable for the subtle use of shallow focus, which again reflects contemporary fashion photography. “We were primarily shooting at about a T2.5 to 2.8, and while Gary was at one point hoping to use a zoom lens in there, it was never going to happen due to the space limitations,” Aschmann explains, adding that he overexposed his stocks by about a half stop. “It was bad enough having a 35mm camera there in terms of where the actors could move and where there was room for lights and anything else. Having those extra two feet [of lens] in front of the camera wouldn't have helped. It could have been intimidat-

amount of light in the room, but also by the fact that it started to snow! We had to keep the outside backgrounds much more blurry than Gary had initially wanted them to be. He'd wanted to balance the light levels between the inside and outside, but we had to start blowing out the windows to conceal the weather conditions. Creating shallow focus was a bit tough too, because we were also using fairly wide lenses.”

Aschmann relied on Zeiss Superspeeds throughout production of *Party*, shooting the picture with an Arriflex BL-3. “In the kitchen, we were probably always within the range of 25mm to 35mm, with an odd 50mm used for a more telephoto effect on close-ups,” he says. “Fortunately, my crew developed great relationship with the actors, so while the camera was quite intrusive, we could work together.”

With these space considerations, the possibility of shooting *Kitchen Party* in 16mm was briefly proposed, but “I'd never worked in 35mm before, so when the issue came up I just sort of ignored it,”

Burns recalls, explaining that the film was always intended for a 35mm theatrical release. "Unless you're going to shoot a ton of footage, it's just not worth the expense of the blow-up to 35mm.

"Since the kitchen scenes primarily had this portrait-style photography, I wanted the skin tones to be correct and the detail in the actors' faces to be really sharp, which would have been lost in a blow-up process from 16mm. Some of our actors were only 15 years old, and they had great skin tones which were given a really interesting look by the fluorescent lighting we used."

Although Aschmann did benefit from his discussions with Burns in preproduction, the kitchen shoot was plotted out primarily on the fly. Says the director, "We had zero rehearsals, but a couple of days before the shoot, Bob and I went to the location with most of the actors and tried to block things out in a general sense. We were working with as many as 15 kids in this small space, so that was really helpful to both of us. Our production designer, Doug Hardwick, then made up some floor plans of the kitchen so we could figure out our coverage a bit more accurately."

Camera angles were almost always determined by the characters' point of view. "I like to cover things in the most unobtrusive way possible," says Burns. "I didn't want to use any extreme high or low angles because they would distract the audience, but we did opt for a few weird, more objective angles when one character falls off a chair and lands on the living-room rug. But that marked the first time we left the kitchen, so it was okay to add something like that to the shot to make it more impactful. The only time the camera went into any of the other rooms in the house was after a character did first."

Filming the parents' cocktail party, however, was another matter

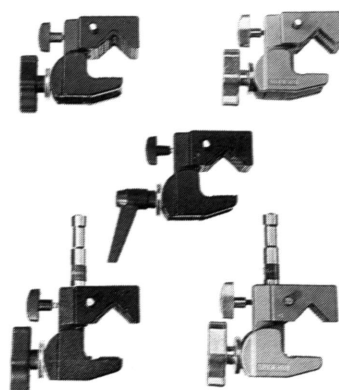
entirely. Remembers Aschmann, "In the preproduction period, we focused so strongly on the kids' scenes that our discussion of the parents' scenes fell a bit short in terms of developing a distinctly different visual approach. Gary wanted the photography to be much more conventional. Time was getting short by that time, so the lighting was a lot simpler as well. We spent 10 days with the kids in the kitchen, but only two with the parents."

"We decided to cover the parents in a more traditional, TV-type style," Burns offers, "starting with a wide master and then moving in tighter. This was a very conscious effort, and it helped separate the two worlds. We never did any masters in the kitchen with the kids, and it's only as the scenes play out that you get an overall sense of that space. We're always close, and there are only a few shots where the camera is outside seeing the entire room, again motivated by the action. For the parents though, we tried to be more comfortable lighting-wise, using warmer colors throughout."

"Instead of using a top-light approach," Aschmann details, "we rationalized all of the light through the windows for the daytime scenes. At this point, though, the scenes were supposed to be taking place at dusk, so we just set out lights a bit lower to give a bit more of a sidelight, while the colors of the room and furnishings added warmth to the scenes. The light was a bit harder, but still softened though big silks."

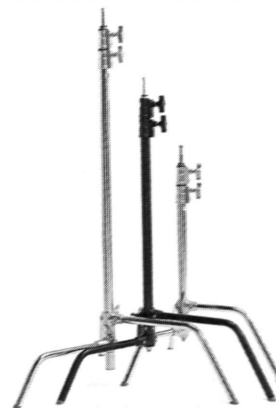
Reflecting back on the project, Aschmann credits gaffer John McIntosh for helping the *Kitchen Party* shoot to succeed. "We went to film school together, and John reads my mind like nobody else," the cinematographer notes. "I like playing with textures of light, and after I go through a number of combinations to create something, he generally comes up with what I wanted in the first place." ■

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Blood Feast



In *Shopping for Fangs*, cinematographer Lisa Wiegand teams with co-directors Quentin Lee and Justin Lin to create a genre-blending “B-movie horror action thriller.”

by Holly Willis

Photography by Fiona Ng

In an abandoned alley bathed in blue-black nighttime hues, a cocky young ruffian throws a lone woman up against a cold, brick wall. Suddenly, a lavishly blonde, dangerously high-heeled woman enters, pistol in hand. Caught from behind in an energetic handheld shot, she sends the lustful rogue scampering off with his tail between his legs.

This explosive scene sets the tone for the “GenerAsian X” film *Shopping for Fangs*. The feature debut of co-directors Quentin Lee and Justin Lin, the picture traffics in glib



Opposite: Director of photography Lisa Wiegand, AC David Colclasure, art director Deeya Loram, director Quentin Lee and second AC Joel Juarez observe as actors Jeannie Cho and Clint Jung run through their climactic confrontation. This page: Infected with Phil's wolfen blood, Sammi (Jennifer Hengstenberg) rifles through a fridge for some raw sustenance.

cultural references, mixes genres, sexualities, and nationalities with impunity, and deftly blends parody and pastiche. A postmodern psychological thriller, *Fangs* focuses on Phil (Radmar Jao), a loner desperate to fit into any societal mold, whose repression and angst manifest themselves as weird spurts of hair sprouting all over his body. Soon, Phil finds his uncontrollable animal urges leading him to a monstrous and potentially tragic fate. Meanwhile, Katherine (Jeanne Chin), a bored housewife prone to blackouts, finds herself being lured into love by Trinh (Chin

again), who has been leaving a trail of romantic notes and photos. Fueled by jealousy and armed with a gun, Katherine's husband, Jim (Clint Jung), goes after his spouse and her lesbian lover in a wild climax which interweaves the tales of the film's three protagonists.

Lee is a Hong Kong-bred filmmaker who spent his adolescent years in Montreal, Canada, and studied film theory and criticism as a UC Berkeley undergraduate. After earning an M.A. in English from Yale, he did his graduate studies in film production at UCLA. Lee compiled his

debut feature — *Flow* — from four student films produced during his first two years at UCLA, one of which, *Four 1990*, received UCLA's honored Spotlight Award.

Lin was born in Taipei and raised in Orange County, California. He has produced/directed a number of short films and videos, including *Soybean Milk*, which also earned the Spotlight Award at UCLA, where he first met Lee while studying film as an undergraduate. The duo's collaboration began when Lin presented Lee with a story-in-progress about a werewolf. Recalls Lee, "We were both

Blood Feast

trying to come up with something about a younger generation of Asian-Americans. A lot of previous Asian-American films have been didactic; we wanted to do something that would touch on certain themes, but put them into play. We decided to try to combine a couple of our stories."

for *Fangs*. "It was a great film to work on because there are these very different stories, each with a dramatically different style and approach. With [the character] Trinh, the camera was virtually always handheld and I did a lot of overexposures. The photography was a lot more energetic than in

owned. Although they were timid about us shooting there, Quentin convinced them that it would be okay. But this meant that we'd have to get in there, shoot, and then get out very quickly. We would just throw up a couple of lights and work until we saw that they were beginning to freak out, then we'd just finish and run out."

"It was a good thing that we had gone to film school and had friends who were willing to help out for nothing."

**— co-director
Justin Lin**



Above: Trinh (Jeanne Chin) and Jim (Clint Jung) engage a tense face-off. Right: A pre-wolfen Phil (Radmar Jao) tries his swinger routine on Sammi, to the protests of a potential suitor (John Spelling).

A year later, the screenplay was finished and Lee began searching for production money. As a Canadian citizen, he was able to get a Canada Council grant to cover about 30 percent of the project's budget. From there, Lee solicited small investments from family friends, securing the capital he needed to get the film shot and edited.

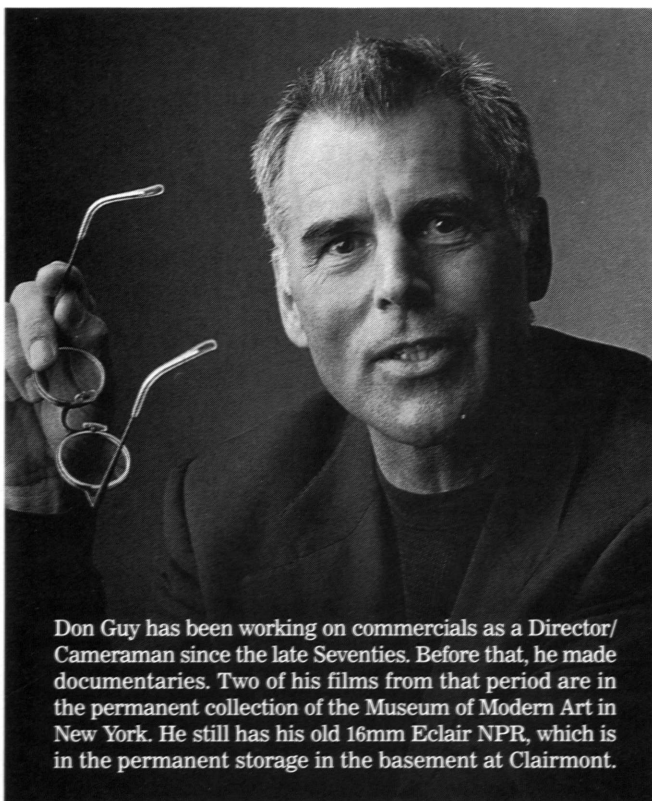
Meanwhile, Lin began to gather cast and crew. "With the crew, we had to get people who really wanted to work because they weren't going to get paid," he details. "It was a good thing that we had gone to film school and had friends who were willing to help out for nothing." One of those friends was Lisa Wiegand, a fellow graduate student who followed her studies at UCLA with a one-year cinematography fellowship at the American Film Institute. She relished the opportunity to shoot a feature, especially one as wacky as *Shopping*

the other stories." Concur Lee, "Trinh's story is more prone to improvisation. With Katherine's story I wanted to create the sense of a psychological fourth wall, which was done with kind of quiet, still shots." Wiegand further explains that the photography for Phil was open to various interpretations, much like his metamorphic persona. "When it needed to be handheld, it was; when we needed to dolly, we did. We also did a lot of experimenting with darkness and shadows in that section of the film."

But given *Fangs'* \$100,000 budget and breakneck 18-day schedule (which more than 20 locations spread between Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley), the creative option of switching between visual styles was definitely a recipe for chaos. Recalls Wiegand, "Quentin would get us into these locations all over Alhambra that were Chinese-

One of the many detriments to shooting on the fly was that it precluded the execution of proper camera tests. "There were at least two locations where I knew I needed to do some tests," says Wiegand, who shot *Fangs* with an Arriflex BL-4 and Superspeed primes, using Fuji Super F-500 8571 stock for interiors and nights, and F-64D 8521 for daytime exteriors. "We were using a lot of Kino Flos to supplement the fluorescent lighting that we found at our locations. To check the color temperature and flicker of the practicals in these two particular places, I just walked into each with my camera running. They'd say, 'No, you can't shoot any tests in here,' and I'd say, 'Okay,' but by the time I walked out I'd already shot enough footage for my test."

Lee and Lin tried to minimize the turmoil of low-budget production through storyboarding, but this



Don Guy has been working on commercials as a Director/Cameraman since the late Seventies. Before that, he made documentaries. Two of his films from that period are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He still has his old 16mm Eclair NPR, which is in the permanent storage in the basement at Clairmont.

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“We were shooting inside the Lick Observatory in San Jose. Beautiful, ninety-year-old domed ceiling, huge old telescope,” says Don Guy. “We wanted to suggest disorientation and weightlessness. Our spokesman was Apollo 13 astronaut Jim Lovell, wearing his NASA flight jacket.”

“Up close to the center of the dome, we hung a revolving, mirrored globe – the kind used in ballrooms. Specular light from a 4k Xenon bounced off the mirrors onto the ceiling, to suggest stars moving across. On the floor, we installed a large turntable – the kind used to display cars at auto shows.”

“On the turntable, we set up a BL-4, low and pointing upward at an angle. As the turntable rotated, we could see the curved ceiling,

the star lights and sometimes the telescope itself moving past more or less horizontally. Jim Lovell was also on the turntable, crouching down, out of sight. When he stood up during the shot, his head and shoulders would appear in the lower half of the frame, talking to camera while the ceiling dome rotated behind him.”

“The BL-4 was mounted on a Clairmont Roundy Round, which was set so the camera was upside down at the beginning of the shot. When Jim Lovell’s head appeared, it emerged from the *top* of the frame and he was upside down. As he talked to camera, we used the Roundy Round’s motor to rotate the camera slowly until Jim was eventually right way up. And we kept going, until he was upside down again and still talking normally.”

“As everyone in this business knows, we *need* shots like that, to grab the viewer’s attention and to make the story point quickly and vividly. All those one-of-a-kind accessories at Clairmont came into being because somebody needed to get a shot like that. They were all designed to make our work stand out from the clutter on the TV screen.”

“There’s another point I’d like to make: When you tell the Clairmonts you’d like to get a certain effect and you wish there were a tool to get it with, they take that and run with it. The Skatecam they made for me was far more sophisticated than what I’d envisioned and it let me do much more than I’d hoped for. It was like asking for a hamburger and getting a steak sandwich with a salad and a bottle of wine.”

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Backed by 2nd AC Juarez, Wiegand captures a handheld shot of Katherine (Jeanne Chin) being roughed-up by a carjacker (Jason Wong) as director Lee and gaffer Sal Alvarez watch from the background.

wasn't always adequate groundwork. Notes Lin, "You go to all the locations during preproduction and everything seems fine, but things change when you get on location due to time restraints. While storyboarding you can find the essence of each scene, so when some crisis occurs, you're prepared. For example, while filming the church scene [in which Phil accompanies a potential suitor to her house of worship], we had a power outage. I had to throw the storyboard away and go with what I *could* shoot given the situation. And for the football scene [in which the non-athletic Phil scores a personal coup by tackling Jim, a beefcake jock] everyone showed up at the wrong park in Brentwood; by the time we got everyone together, the sun was going down, so I had to cut the scene by a third."

Financial constraints were also evident in terms of lens usage: "Sometimes I planned on using a longer lens, but with the time constraints, I couldn't do that," Lin says. "With a longer lens, you need time to work things out more carefully, and we didn't have that kind of time."

Shopping for Fangs' best scenes are those in which the filmmakers transformed their limitations into assets. One such sequence is a sexual

encounter between Phil and Sammi (Jennifer Hengstenberg) which occurs in a dark room lit with a strobing white light. "That was fun," says Wiegand. "We undercranked the camera and there was a grip holding a light, swinging it back and forth, trying to make it look as wacky and funky as possible." Adds Lin, "The hardest part was that I had assured the two actors that nipples and private areas were not going to show, so we had to basically glue bits of pantyhose onto them."

Another time-saving technique was the handheld shooting of Trinh's sequences. Comments Wiegand, "The BL-4 is pretty heavy, and we were shooting with 400' and 1,000' magazines. Sometimes all we had was a 1,000' roll, and we didn't have time to break it down into a smaller package for handheld work. So we'd have this 1,000' load on the camera, which, with the magazine, the lens, and the mattebox, weighed about 45 pounds. I only weigh 115 pounds, and I was carrying a 45-pound camera on my shoulder, trying to do these shots where I was bending over to follow someone's feet and then tilting up to their face. That was rough."

Another effective sequence presents Phil's transformation from

respectable short-haired accountant into wild-haired werewolf. Lin wanted to reveal this metamorphosis in one continuous shot, but the budget couldn't accommodate the necessary special effects. The dilemma was solved with clever camerawork and editing. Wiegand explains, "First, we created a streetlight effect that would be bright enough to light Phil as he walked under it, but still allow everything else drop off to black. Starting in darkness, we dollied with him as he walked through the light and then back into black." This was repeated with successively elaborate makeup effects added to the actor. With the shots cut together in sequence, the result appears as a single shot in which Phil walks through a series of dark and light patches beneath streetlamps. As we catch sight of him at each interval, he's further into his wolven mutation.

Trinh's heroic opening-scene entrance was shot in a Hollywood alley, which happened to be the one location that the filmmakers had to pay for. Says Lin, "We had to pay \$200 for two hours, and that was to cover the use of power from one of the buildings." The power went to several HMIs which were used to cross-light the scene, supplementing an overhead streetlight. Offers Wiegand, "We used a 1.2K Par, a 1.2K Fresnel, and a couple of Kino Flos. We always used whatever was there, too. We had a lot of conflicting color temperatures, and sometimes that scene bothers me when I see it now. But we just had to work with whatever we had. If we could get an exposure, it was a great thing."

A tricky sequence in which Phil becomes the victim of hit-and-run accident — photographed on Traction Avenue in downtown L.A. — entailed a rather inspired choice of equipment. "I had planned this very ambitious scene when Phil gets hit by a car," explains Lin. "I wanted to have this slow-motion shot of him flying through the air with just blue

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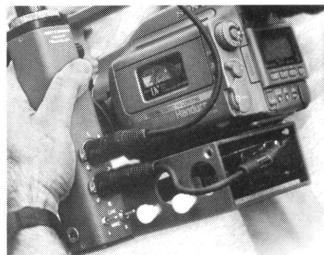
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Blood Feast

him flying through the air with just blue sky behind him. So we went to Price Club, bought this 20-foot trampoline, and carted it over to the location." The filmmakers had a permit to shoot dialogue on the sidewalk, but they went ahead and set up the trampoline in the middle of the street to serve as a springboard. Luckily, the traffic was light. The weather, wasn't quite as accommodating, however. "Even though it was the middle of the summer, there were clouds," says Wiegand. "But we didn't want the clouds." To get around them, the cinematographer sought out patches of blue and had actor Radmar Jao positioned on a ladder to strategically flail as she lined up the clear sky in the background. She adds, "There's another fun shot in that sequence where we see the car's POV. We put the camera on a dolly and, without using track and running at six frames per second, we just rolled over all the potholes and bumps in the street to get this crazy, shaky shot moving all the way up to Phil. We froze when we got up into a close-up and then switched to slow-motion just as Phil turns and looks at the camera."

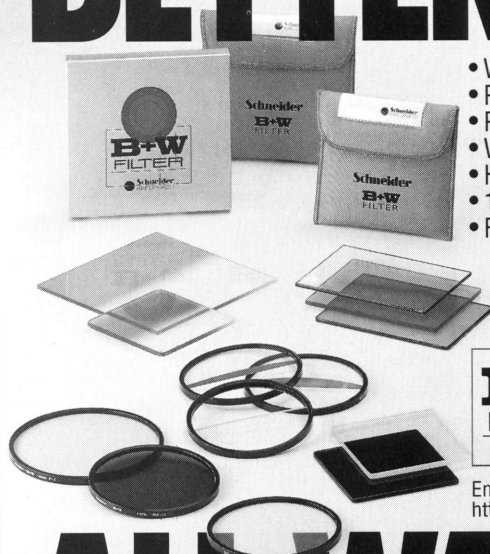
Although Lin, Lee, and Wiegand all confess to being a bit frustrated by the budget limitations on *Shopping For Fangs*, the filmmakers are pleased with what they accomplished given their restricted resources. However, a few problems were beyond their control. For example, one roll of film was ruined by a lab in processing, requiring a full day of expensive reshooting. But these difficulties were worth the hassle; the picture earned the Audience Award at last year's Seattle Asian-American Film Festival, scored a coup as the opening night film at 1997 Vancouver Asian Film Festival, and was presented at this year's Singapore Film Festival. It will be seen in limited U.S. release this May through director Lee's own distribution company, Margin Films. ■

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Death of a Dream



Director John Sayles shoots south of the border for his Spanish-language drama *Men With Guns*.

Interview by Andrew O. Thompson

Photography by Shane Young

As one of America's most esteemed independent filmmakers, John Sayles has repeatedly demonstrated a preference for cinematic stories in which social politics are driven not only by the various characters, but by their surroundings as well. The writer/director has explored this symbiotic relationship in such diverse films as *The Brother from Another Planet* (see AC Dec. '84), *Matewan* (AC April '88), *City of Hope*, *Passion Fish*, *The Secret of Roan Inish* (AC Feb. '95) and *Lone Star* (AC June '96).

Sayles' latest work, *Men With Guns*, continues his fascination with unique environments. Set in an unnamed Latin American country, the film concerns the recently widowed Humberto Fuentes (played by Argentine actor Federico Luppi), an upper-class physician whose exalted social position has left him unaware of the political and economic strife racking his largely impoverished nation. With both retirement and an illness looming, the doctor ventures into the surrounding countryside to visit some former students who, as part of an international health cooperative, he once trained to treat the poor. Throughout his extensive travels, however, the naive doctor comes to

Photos courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics.

the grim realization that all of his protégés have been murdered by a mysterious militia referred to by the villagers simply as “men with guns.”

AC recently spoke with Sayles regarding about the project, which was filmed at three disparate Mexican locations in the director's second language, Spanish. We also sought out details of the film's evocative imagery, which was shot by Polish cameraman Slawomir Idziak (*Gattaca*, *The Journey of August King*, *Three Colors: Blue* and *The Double Life of Veronique*). At press time, Idziak was shooting Cathal Black's *Love and Rage* on location in Ireland.

anonymous nation?

Sayles: If you set a film in a specific country, you create the responsibility of addressing the specifics of that country. Some of the incidents in the movie are based on events that didn't even happen in Latin America, but in Vietnam, Bosnia, the former Soviet Union, and Africa; in addition, the incidents from Latin America happened in two or three different countries. That's one of the reasons I have such a generic title: *Men With Guns*. Half the movies ever made could be called *Men With Guns*. The film is a very realistic fable, a quality which is

like *Dry River*, *Dirty Faces*, *High Mountain* and *Cerca del Cielo* [Close to Heaven] — rather than actual geographical names.

Prior to even writing the script, you had scouted locations in Mexico. How did this influence the choices you made in selecting sites for the doctor's trip?

Sayles: The story of *Men With Guns* was always a geographical journey, so I had a shopping list of locations prior to scouting. My outline says that the doctor goes from a large city of plastic and glass through a dry plain, into more irri-

The bitter army deserter Domingo (Damián Delgado) details the horrors of his traumatic tour of duty as Graciela (Tania Cruz), a mute rape victim, withers in her own world. Director John Sayles (opposite) found the jungle scenes to be the most problematic to film.



American Cinematographer: You've previously stated that *Men With Guns* was inspired by actual events. If so, why is the film set in an

sustained by *not* announcing that this is Guatemala, El Salvador, or Argentina. Instead there are generic Spanish names for the locations —

gated rolling hills, through foothills where coffee grows, and finally up into jungle mountains. Therefore, we needed a big city, an absolutely

Death of a Dream

Right: Cameraman Slawomir Idziak plots his next shot.

Below: Stranded in the jungle with homeless orphan Conejo (Dan Rivera Gonzalez), the once-naïve Dr. Humberto Fuentes (Federico Luppi) begins to see his country in a different light.

flat and uninhabited dry plain, flat canefields, rolling coffee and banana country and a steep mountain jungle area. If we'd had more money, I might have shot in four different countries — starting in Buenos Aires, going through the Dominican Republic and ending up in Bolivia — but on a budget of \$2.5 million, even the amount of traveling we had to do across Mexico was a strain. We only had six weeks [of principal photography], and shooting in Mexico City, Veracruz state, and Chiapas state is like shooting a movie in New York, Chicago and Wyoming: your location people and art department are all spread out, and whenever you want to check for other locations, you have to get on a plane or a bus for 4 to 11 hours.

The antiseptic, austere look of the doctor's office and apartment stand in stark contrast to the wilds of

Colonia San Angel] was a place where both sides of the house were totally windowed; in order to block out a couple of those windows, we built panels which were very much like walls. We designed it to look as if he had some money and his late wife had had some taste. However, [the

art. The same was true with his office. We went into a clinic that was just starting out, and there was something very homey about it, with abstract art on the walls and big spaces of pure, cool blues and whites. With him, we were definitely going for a sense of calm and coolness,



the jungle.

Sayles: We chose places that had a modern art museum look — lots of big empty walls. The doctor's home [photographed in Mexico City's upscale neighborhood of

decorations in the house] didn't indicate that he had ever traveled, so there weren't any knick-knacks or ethnic items from around the country — it was more abstract modern

though without making a big point of the fact that he lives in an air-conditioned world. The minute the doctor gets out of his car, though, it's hot, and then he's walking through canefields.

[In some of the outlying rural locations], we were going for the idea of a Mayan or Inca kitsch. For example, at the restaurant where the doctor talks to his son-in-law, we used colors that clashed a little bit; it was actually an Indian restaurant which we turned into a Inca kitsch restaurant. And in the lobby of the hotel where he meets an American couple, there are all of these tiki torches and things of that nature. Once again, we went a little wilder with the colors there, because the idea was that there was something inauthentic about this place.

Were sets ever built on the various locations, or were the sites merely redressed to the script's specifications?

Sayles: As far as construction was concerned, our big set was the



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Death of a Dream

Dr. Fuentes strides through an impoverished area of Capital City, seeing but not really experiencing the socioeconomic truths of his fictional Latin American homeland.



internment camp, which was actually an abandoned, sunken-into-the-ground sugar mill [located in Veracruz state's town of Jalapilla.] The area was totally overgrown with weeds that were 20 feet high, so our art department and some local guys we hired just cut everything down — which is exactly what the army would do. It was easy place to make an internment camp, because there were some standing buildings for shelter, some walls to tie into, and a big hole in the ground where you could put a group of people.

For the huts — [the dwellings of] the people living in Cerca del Cielo — the art department once again hired local guys to build [structures] using the same materials with which they built their own homes: banana trees, bamboo, or liana. On the day we burned down some of the huts, the local people were upset; they'd had their eye on them [to live in]. So although the huts seemed like facades to us, they were pretty nice houses to everyone else.

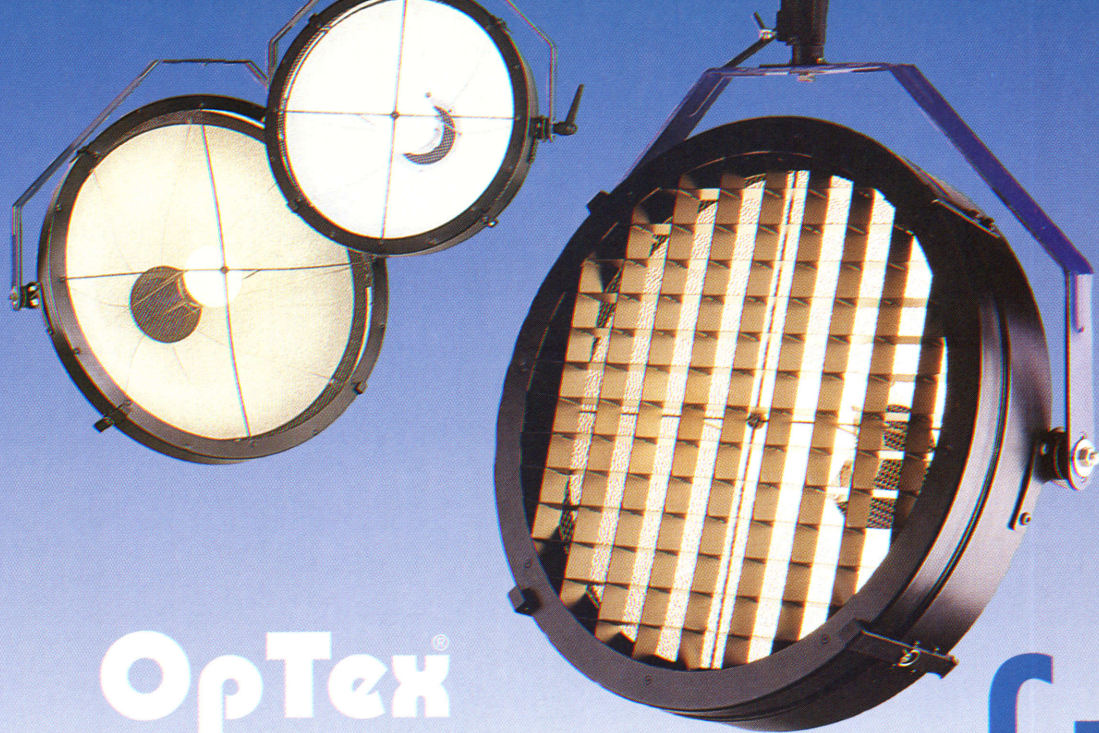
Overall, the film has a very subtle use of camera movement, and its framing remains rather stable. The most dramatic movements occur when the camera is following a character's movements or panning from one character to another. What was the dramatic reasoning behind this?

Sayles: To a certain extent, I was trying to keep the camera movement from being editorial, since *Men With Guns* has more of a fable-like quality than my other work. The 360-degree pans in *Lone Star* — changing from one era to another without a cut — may be subtle, but they're definitely editorial. Here, I really wanted to emphasize the places themselves. The doctor's journey begins in this big city where he's very comfortable and knows what goes on — at least thinks he does. It's his world, while Indians who are not equipped for that [type of metropolitan] life are begging on the sidewalk. After his journey, he's the one who's not dressed right, and doesn't know

how to survive out there in the jungle, and they're the ones who are at home.

Since the setting is so important, a lot of our camera movement was basically prescribed by the point of view. If we're seeing things through the doctor's eyes, we're going to be a little tighter on him and turning corners with him; if the action occurs through the eyes of the woman and her daughter [who provide bookend narration to the doctor's journey], it unfolds almost like a tableau from some distance. I was able to use wider shots [in *Men With Guns*] than I have in my other movies. If you're in a less natural setting in a low-budget movie, you often can't control the whole world; you end up shooting into corners because everything else looks like the wrong era, the wrong city or the wrong sociology.

Given the importance of locations, had you ever considered shooting *Men With Guns* in

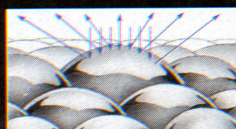


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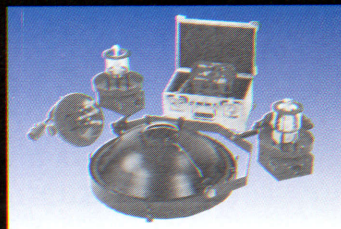
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Death of a Dream

anamorphic or Super 35 to better encompass the breadth of the locales?

Sayles: I always consider widescreen when thinking through the movie to see if it works for the locations. There were a few places in *Men With Guns*, such as the dry plain or the cane country, where it would have been a nice format to use, because the landscapes are very horizontal out there. But it just didn't make much sense for the whole picture, especially once you get into jungle areas. The cinematographer, Slawomir [Idziak], would always say that you can't really see the jungle unless you're on the edge. It's just very claustrophobic once you're in it: all you see are the five trees that are crowding you in. There could be a parking lot beyond them, but you're not going to see it. In that situation, anamorphic really wasn't going to do much good. I also find that with anamorphic, the choice of lens tends to be more limited: you can work with a 100mm and a 50mm, but not much else; when you get much wider than 50mm, the edges start to bend a little bit, and you don't want to pan too fast.

Save for the doctor, the various characters view their flashbacks through scenes imbued with an amber haze. Was that achieved with filters on the lens, or via postproduction timing?

Sayles: Both. Slawomir was trying to get a kind of golden look with the filters as we were shooting. In post, we adjusted that slightly to try to even [the filters] out, and give them a slightly different edge.

We used black-and-white for the doctor's reveries during which he remembers his students. We shot those dream sequences on a stage with a white cyclorama behind it, overexposing a little and then printing them to be very contrasty. It's the faces of the kids, and not the details of the room, that were important. All

he sees during these reveries are their faces; everything else just disappears to him.

Was the production able to bring much equipment and lighting gear while you were shooting at some of these rather remote locations?

Sayles: Mexico doesn't have a large film industry, but they do have a very healthy TV industry, and [the American production of] *The Mark of Zorro* was gearing up while we were there. The equipment we got was second-string, so sometimes the batteries didn't quite work, and the lights burned out a little earlier. We couldn't afford cranes, and our car rig really never worked — it was a contraption someone tried to make into a Lowboy, but it wasn't low enough, and it really wasn't made for movies. One day the brakes would catch on fire, and the next day the thing couldn't get up the hill. We had a lot of those types of problems.

To light our nighttime scenes, we would usually hang one main source up on some scaffolding for our overall ambiance, along with some supplementary fill, and then add a lot of burn bars for fire effects. We might have some lights on the ground behind trees to shoot light diagonally across the scene, but never in huge areas; we usually let the world fall off into blackness fairly close to base. With the people around firelight at night, you just want light a couple of feet from the fire then let it start to fall and go totally black in the distance. We didn't want to edge the trees with one of those super-flood fixtures that some movies use to light football fields and city blocks.

Did the fact that you were an English-speaking person directing a Mexican crew in Spanish — and that Slawomir's first language is Polish — greatly impact the logistics of shot-blocking and filming?

Sayles: Not really. Slawomir's





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Death of a Dream

crew was very good and anticipated what he wanted, and he had an interpreter whenever he needed to try to explain something. What we found in Chiapas — just as when we shot *Matewan* in West Virginia — is that it's very easy to be isolated not only from the people in the big city, but also from those in the next hollow. Very often, the Indian village just 10 miles away over a mountain pass would be a totally different language group. In the scene where the men from the village are deciding with the priest whether to sacrifice themselves, run or fight, the actors spoke Tzotzil and the extras spoke Chol. The extras didn't have a clue as to what the Indian actors were saying. The actors spoke Spanish and the extras didn't, so I would have to explain the situation to the extras through an interpreter: I would speak Spanish and the interpreter would speak Chol. The extras were familiar with the situation [set forth in the film's plot], because they worked very close to the Guatemalan border, but didn't know what a movie was. They had heard of them, but nobody had ever seen a movie or a TV show. The only thing they could relate to the idea of doing a scene over and over again would be the Catholic mass.

Language wasn't really our problem, but rather the lack of time. We went in there fast and got a lot done, but having to climb up the side of a hill in the jungle for your next setup can take half an hour. We also had some weather problems: four days of torrential rain washed away one of our sets in Chiapas, which is a very mountainous state. When it rains there, it comes in cascades — that's where all of Mexico's hydro-electric power comes from. Not only did we get four days of rain without a break, but we couldn't shoot the next day because the water was so high everywhere that it was deafening: we couldn't shoot sync sound. Our next shot was supposed to be by

"One of the problems with my movies is that it's often hard to say what they're about in less than two sentences. I think that makes them more interesting, but much harder to sell."

**— director
John Sayles**

a pretty little stream, and by that point it was a raging torrent.

Mexico is not a country that makes a lot of movies, so the production people's experience level probably isn't what you would get on an equivalent-sized production in the United States. We hardly brought anyone down from the U.S. [in terms of crew], so it was pretty much like making a Mexican film. But \$2.5 million is a healthy budget for a Mexican production. The cast and crew were really terrific, but it could still be tough down there. The phones don't always work, the banks aren't always open, and the roads aren't always good. In addition, the locations were difficult because half of them were in a state which was in revolution. But it didn't really affect us other than that sometimes our location people would get hung up behind a military barricade for a couple of hours. Certain locations, however, were just off-limits, not so much because of the confrontation between the Zapatistas and the government, but because the Catholics and the Evangelical Christians would be feuding in that particular town. The people in those places would tell us that it was just too tense to let anyone in from the outside in, because it would just cause additional trouble.

As a filmmaker, what inspires you to tackle stories set in distinct

locales with very specific cultures?

Sayles: Different locales create different cultures: if you're in the desert, you're going to encounter a different culture than if you're in the mountains. Also, because film is a visual medium, the location you shoot in tells part of the story. John Ford kept going back to Monument Valley for that very reason. Most probably, my next movie, called *Limbo*, is going to be set in Alaska, which is a frontier that is just starting to be tamed. The state's frontier aspect means that there are still a lot more men there than women, and that *really* affects the culture.

Limbo is a funny hybrid — it has elements of a Joseph Conrad story. It's about a fisherman who hasn't been to sea for years because as a young guy he was captain of a fishing boat that sank. A couple of his friends drowned, and he feels responsible. He then gets into a family situation with a woman who's up there on a tour — she's a Ramada Inn singer. Her daughter works at the same restaurant as the fisherman, and has a crush on him. Together, they form this strange family. It's also about people dealing with the world changing in such a way that what they used to do — be it fishing, mining coal or cutting down trees — is becoming more restricted; there's now less of a chance to make a living at it as an individual. Industrial tourism is coming in, so parts of Alaska are turning into places like Ghirardelli Square and Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. These once very rough towns now have tour boats pull up, and a lot of geriatric people get off of them and go to the former whorehouse, which now has a gift shop. The film is quite complicated. One of the problems with my movies is that it's often hard to say what they're about in less than two sentences. I think that makes them more interesting, but much harder to sell. ■

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The Maine-based International Film & Television Workshops
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Learning to See

by Bill Linsman

Rockport is a charming harbor village nestled along the rugged coastline of Maine. Two diverse industries flourish in this tiny community: lobster fishing and photographic education. For the past two decades, Rockport has served as home base for the International Film & Television Workshops (IFTW), a place where thousands of aspiring filmmakers have benefitted from the teachings of industry experts.

The IFTW began as a summer program for creative filmmakers and photographers, but has grown into a year-round center for image-makers. The program recently became authorized to grant college credit, and formed Rockport College, where students can earn an Associate Arts or Master of Fine Arts degree. The entire program, including all of the summer and fall offerings, is detailed in course catalogues published every February — one for the still photography classes and another specializing in film and video work for motion pictures. A separate catalogue is available on the IFTW web site (www.MEWorkshops.com).

In addition to the Still Photography and Motion Picture classes, others are offered in the categories of Documentary Film, Advanced Video, Corporate Video,



Photos courtesy of International Film & Television Workshops.

TV Commercials and Television. The film and video catalogue describes a number of longer programs as well: the Summer Film School, a Resident Filmmakers program, and even a series of two-week summer studies for high school filmmakers, actors and photographers. The IFTW also conducts international seminars in Tuscany, Italy; Provence, France; and Oaxaca, Mexico.

This extensive program had more modest beginnings in 1976, when still photographer David Lyman created the Maine Photographic Workshops. Lyman, who continues to serve as the program's director, says that his efforts stemmed from his passion for visual imagery. "The Workshops were the result of a personal experience that I had in Aspen, Colorado, in 1972," he says. "I was 32 years old and a very energetic, enthusiastic photographer and magazine writer working in the ski business. While my work was exciting and glamorous, it was not fulfilling my soul. I thought I would love to photograph the kind of stories I saw in *National Geographic*, stories about people and societies, and anthropology and visual culture. I heard that Robert Gelka, who was the director of photography at *National Geographic* at the time, was going to give a 10-day workshop at a place called The Center of the Eye in Aspen. I sent off my portfolio, my deposit, and application, and was accepted. I went with great anticipation of showing Mr. Gelka my portfolio. I brought my passport, figuring he was going to say, 'All right, I've got a job for you, son. I want you to go to Afghanistan. When can you leave?' And I'd say, 'Tomorrow, sir.'"

"On the second day, I had the opportunity to present my portfolio to Mr. Gelka. Halfway through the review, he closed it, pushed it back to me, and said, 'Do you earn a living with this stuff?' and then turned to the next student."

Disappointed by this rebuff, Lyman went back to his usual rou-

tine. "I continued to do the same thing that I'd always been doing, but in the midst of my depression an idea was born. I told my colleagues that I was going to start my own [workshop]. And they said, 'My God, where?' I replied, 'Up on the coast of Maine.' They thought it was a marvelous idea. I just threw that out as a passing thing; I'd thought about it, but not seriously. But they said, 'That's a fantastic idea. It's amazing nobody's thought about it before.' In the beginning, the idea didn't involve motion pictures, just still photography.

"But the core of the idea was the notion that image-makers work intuitively. It's not an intellectual

process. If we start intellectualizing, it's usually over a few beers at a bar, when the day's work is over. The rest of the time, we're operating on automatic pilot. We don't really think about what we're doing because we're too busy responding to what's going on around us. The foundation of my thinking was to set up a program that would teach intuitively, not intellectually."

As Lyman developed his plans for what would become the IFTW, he discovered something very unexpected: motivated people working together in this idyllic environment and spending a week with a veteran professional could absorb and produce a tremendous amount of cre-

Opposite: Gerald Hirschfeld, ASC educates his class on the Rockport campus. **Below:** Garrett Brown demonstrates the versatility of the Steadicam.



Learning to See

ative energy. This happened through a hands-on, uninterrupted and intuitive learning environment. Students were immersed in their studies from the time they awoke in the morning, through mealtimes and on into the night. The formula worked so well with still-photography courses that Lyman decided to add filmmaking studies.

Participants in the early filmmaking Workshops included celebrated director of photography Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC; associate ASC member and Steadicam inventor Garrett Brown; and Australian cinematographer Rob Draper, ACS — who advanced from student to teaching assistant to one of the program's most popular instructors.

Zsigmond, who rose to prominence as the cinematographer of such classic films as *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Deliverance*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, recalls,

and suddenly we had a blackout. The whole town went dark. There we were with the camera and lights, and the lights wouldn't work. I said, 'Wait a second. We can do something while we're waiting for the lights to come back on.' We had a lot of students who had their cars there, so we actually staged the scene by the headlights of the cars. People were crossing in front of the headlights, and their silhouettes were going in front of those lights, and the images were just beautiful. We came up with something out of nothing to show that in a desperate situation, you can use anything for a key light."

Brown reminisces, "In 1980, I had just come back from working on *The Shining*. I had learned a great deal while shooting for Stanley Kubrick; doing 50 and 70 takes [on a given shot] was very productive in the development of the Steadicam. At that time, I was the only person on

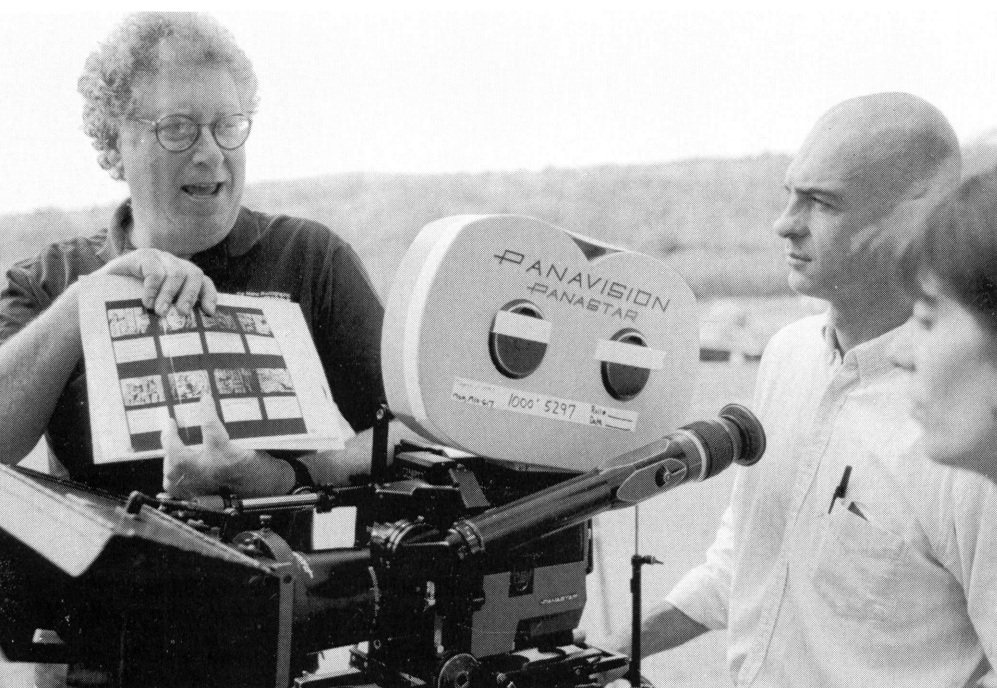
impromptu basis by me at my house.

"I saw an ad for the Maine Photographic Workshops in *American Cinematographer*, and I thought it might be a really good venue for teaching Steadicam. I called up David Lyman and introduced myself, and described what I thought was the opportunity. David was all over it. He immediately saw that this could probably be a very good thing, so we organized and advertised the first Steadicam Workshop in Rockport in the summer of 1980. It was attended by a pretty stellar collection of operators, in terms of their subsequent careers. The Churchill brothers were there, and Randy Nolan was there. I think we had 16 or 20 souls there, basically evolving the prototype for almost all of the subsequent Steadicam classes. We started with basics and then worked our way through shots right away, all over Rockport. David Lyman provided accommodations and the venue, and the various different bits and pieces that we needed. I've taught at maybe 10 or 11 more [seminars] since that first one."

Rob Draper (*The Spitfire Grill*) recalls his first Workshop thusly: "I had read about them in *American Cinematographer* in 1978 when I was shooting commercials and documentaries in Australia. I tried to get into the 1979 classes, but they were full, so I went over in 1980 as a student. The first one was taught by Conrad Hall, ASC, and I wanted to see where, on the global scale of things, I fit into the picture. My trip there was as much a fact-finding mission as it was to come over and rub shoulders with some of the sophisticates of the world.

"I was the first Australian to attend in those very early days. Owen Roizman, ASC was scheduled to be teaching the class I'd enrolled in; he had just photographed *The Electric Horseman*. He got held up and couldn't make it, so Frank Stanley, ASC came in and took over. Then

Bill Linsman offers students some Panaflex pointers.



"August of 1976 was the first time I taught in Rockport. Rob Draper was my assistant. Those first few sessions were a bit haphazard; we were just feeling our way. For example, one time we were lighting a parking lot,

Earth [with an intimate knowledge of Steadicam]. There were not very many other operators who were familiar with the technology yet; there might have been 20 of us. Most were self-taught, or taught on an

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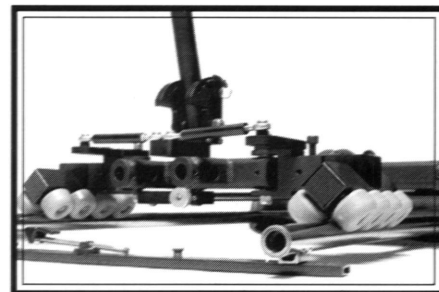
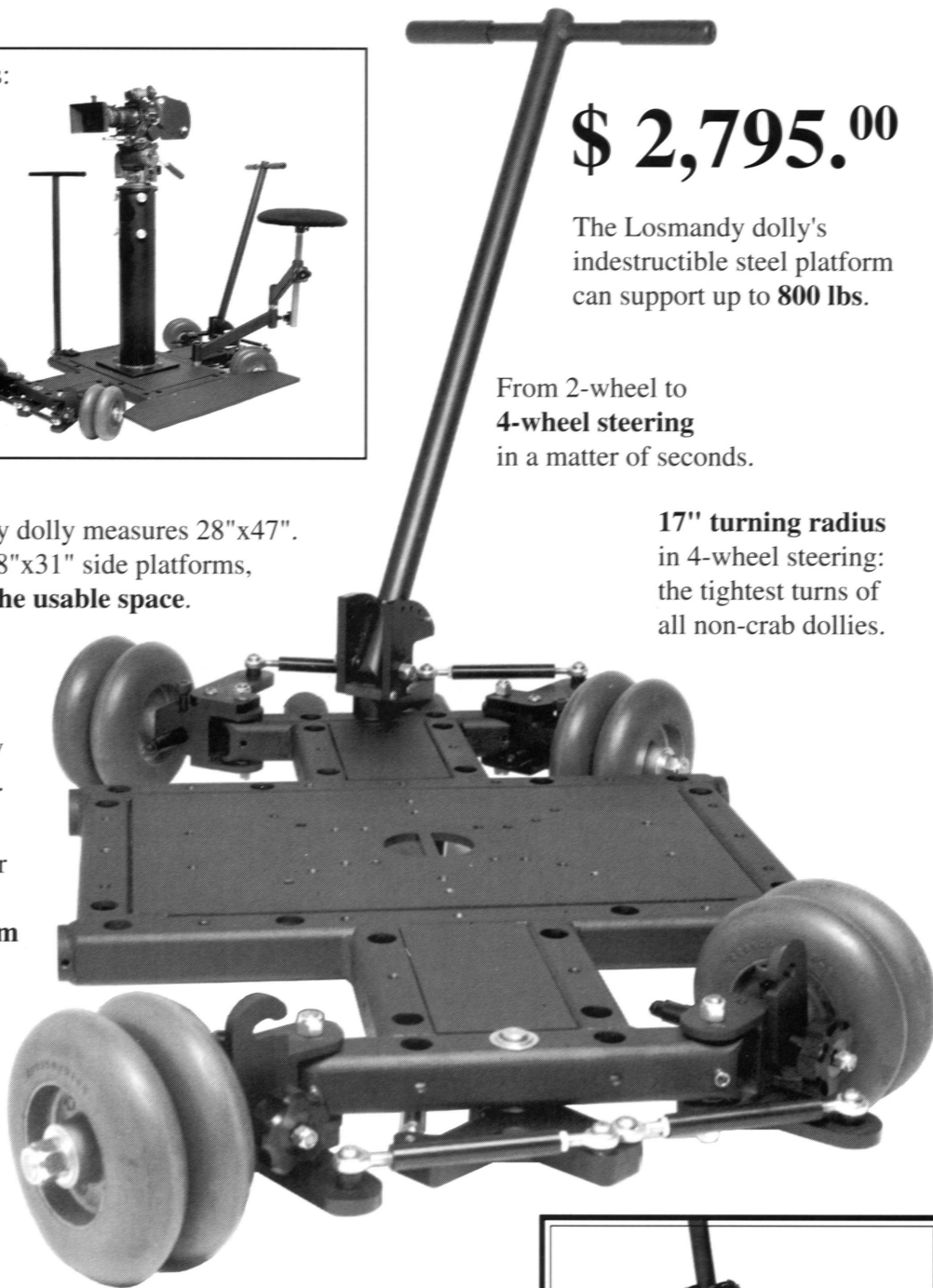
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Learning to See

Billy Williams, BSC offers some operating tips to his workshop group.



Owen turned up on Wednesday, so for the last four days we had both Frank and Owen on the set. It was just fantastic. We were able to talk to them both about how to approach lighting problems, and they had very different perspectives.” Interestingly, another young student who benefited from this particular seminar was future ASC member Russell Carpenter (*True Lies, Titanic*).

Director of photography Robert Primes, ASC (*Bird on a Wire, The Hard Way, My Antonia*) joined the ranks of experts teaching at the Workshops in the mid-Eighties. He lauds the IFTW’s unique and efficient learning system: “You *do* things instead of hearing about them. You actually get a piece of equipment in your hands, work with it, see the results, and have it critiqued and evaluated. You get peer group pressure, you see what your friends are doing, you eat it, breathe it, live it, sleep it, help your friends on their projects — you just get totally immersed. By actually doing, rather

than having someone tell you what to do, you see results within 24 hours, and you then do another exercise the very next day. It’s a very intense learning process with a very short feedback loop. By the end of the week, I could say that everybody in the class I taught had made phenomenal growth, and all of them were a lot better than when they started. And it was done basically without lectures and without much demonstration on my part.”

Gerald Hirschfeld, ASC (*Fail Safe, Young Frankenstein, My Favorite Year*) has also taught at the IFTW and describes the day-to-day itinerary: “We start at nine in the morning, and usually continue until about nine o’clock at night, sometimes a little later. I send students out with a shooting assignment. We then critique their cinematography. I also show them samples of some of my films. We talk about the effects they’re interested in, why I did this or that, or how I lit various scenes. In the lighting classes, we keep going

until 11 or 11:30 p.m., because we’re waiting for dark, working outside. It’s a very intense course. One of the things I do is to try to instill in all of the students a sense of seeing things — not just looking, but seeing and remembering what they see. I have dozens of cards and letters saying, ‘I’m learning to see. I’m learning to see.’ It’s very gratifying.”

One of the masters who has returned to the IFTW to teach dozens of times is cinematographer Billy Williams, BSC (*On Golden Pond, Gandhi, Women in Love*): “Typically, I talk about the role of the cinematographer and his relationship with the crew and the director, and then I demonstrate various forms of lighting: soft light, hard light, how to control light, contrast ratios. I shoot exposure tests to give the students an idea of the latitude of the film stock and the contrast ratio, and we shoot a magic-hour shot, which usually takes place at the Homestead [the campus headquarters for all meals]. We generally start just after supper,

and carry on until dark. This is a demonstration I light with the help of a gaffer; we shoot on 16mm motion picture film, while the students shoot 35mm slides. The next day, we look at the slides, but we don't see the film until the end of the week. On the following Tuesday, the students form into four groups, each with a 16mm camera, and head off to various locations around Rockport. Each person has about two and a half hours to complete an exercise of his or her own choice, and then the groups move around, so that each gets to work in at least four different locations. Some people opt to shoot a day interior, such as the interior of the Homestead; with light coming through the windows, somebody will come in, open the curtains, and sit down. At other times, students may black out the room and shoot a night interior, sometimes with candlelight. One student was particularly ambitious. He tried a lightning effect with rain running down the windows, and created his own lightning by doing a sort of shutter effect with an HMI. It was actually very effective, and he made a very good job of it."

Cinematographer Ric Waite, ASC (*The Long Riders*, 48 Hrs., *On Deadly Ground*), has taught for four summers in Maine. "I normally lecture all day on Mondays, taking students' questions as a basic jumping-off point. In the afternoon, I pick one or two lighting situations, set them up, and illustrate how to shoot them. On Wednesday or Thursday night, we would do an exterior at night, and create a major lighting setup. The students always want to know about 'poor man's process'. Everyone wants to know about what that is and how you do it, which, you know, we do quite often in this business. There are often a lot of questions about my working relationships with directors and actors. I bring along a selection of my movies on laserdisc, and I use them for both question-and-answer sessions and for explaining a lot of light situations, showing students

some of the bigger sets and things. I also show a few movies by other directors. One of my favorites for lighting and camerawork is Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil*, shot by Russell Metty, ASC. That's one of the best ever done, I think."

Gerald Hirschfeld notes that the IFTW has a diverse, international student body. "In the last class I taught, one-third of my students

were from other countries, ranging as far north as Greenland or Iceland, as far south as Kenya, and as far east as the Philippines and Hong Kong. I was also a bit surprised to have a student from London, and I said to him, 'I know there are good film schools in London; why are you here?' He answered, 'I've been to one, but the classes were taught by teachers who learn from books, not by profession-

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Learning to See

Right: Former IFTW student Rob Draper, ACS stages a dolly demonstration. Opposite: Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC makes a point about the fine art of lighting.



als who have worked in the industry, and it makes a big difference.' That's another ingredient that makes the workshops so successful: all of the instructors are people who are working in the industry. They bring with them a lot of practical knowledge, not just book-learning experience."

Greg Hoey, an IFTW alumnus and now a director/camerman of national television commercials, concurs. He says that his early learning experiences with Vilmos Zsigmond changed his life. "One night after we'd finished and had sipped the obligatory Zsigmond espresso and cognac, I asked him, 'I'm slightly drunk now. I have to ask you. I want to know if I have it.' And he replied, 'Yes, you've got it. You've really got it. Now, what are you going to do with it?' Then he added, 'By the way, I think you should consider directing as well as shooting, because the documentary you made shows that you are good with people, and I think you'd be frustrated if you were just a cameraman.' My career took a major turn after that; it didn't happen right off the bat, but I started directing. Vilmos even called me to work for him on *The Deer Hunter*. He said that he'd never worked in a steel mill before, and he saw steel mill stuff on my industrial reel. But I think the main reason he contacted me, quite frankly, was that he felt that

I needed to work on a big show, and he gave it to me. I became sort of an apprentice. I worked as a second or third assistant, sometimes in the electrical department, sometimes as a grip. In fact, I'm on the cover of *The Deer Hunter* issue of *American Cinematographer* [Oct. 1978] in my hard hat, standing next to Vilmos."

Zsigmond explains why so many professionals go out of their way to teach at the IFTW: "I was always grateful to my teachers in Hungary. I spent four years in a film school, and my teachers taught me everything they knew, and more. I've always believed that once somebody learns something and succeeds, one has an obligation to pass that knowledge to the younger generation. I've always felt that responsibility. So when I started to work in America, and learned English, I started to teach and hold seminars. As I remember, the very first one was in Rockport."

Ric Waite seconds Zsigmond's sentiments. "I've been taking for 30 years, and now I'm giving back. Some folks say, 'Ric, I worked for a director of photography and asked him how to do something, but he won't tell me because it's a little secret.' I say, 'Well, that's petty. I'll share any shred of knowledge that I have. I mean, first of all, I respect that you're here because you want my job,

which is fine.' I tell them anything they want to know, and I share all of my 'secrets.' We all have a few, but I have no compunction about revealing mine. I really enjoy the teaching."

Summarizing the continuing philosophy of the IFTW, David Lyman offers, "When people get together with their peers and we put them into a delightful location with enough support, magic happens. The faculty members love the experience, and the students go through a profound change. When somebody leaves after five and a half days, they are emotionally changed, their attitude has shifted, their technical knowledge has increased, and their ability to handle their craft, skills and talent has been more fully realized. They think differently and they feel differently about themselves and about what they might do when they leave. I'm focused on getting each person that comes through here to look at their lives and look at what they do — to look at the world around them and say, 'I can make a difference because of who I am.' In terms of the global picture — sending out people that are going to get Academy Awards and Emmys and all of that stuff — I'm not concerned with that, and I don't think the school's concerned with that either. This is a place where people come to be in touch with themselves. Of course, that's not what we advertise in the brochure, which asks you to learn more about your craft and profession. But the real lesson here is much deeper than that, and only through soulful work — the work that involves your inner self — are you going to be able to do the work you'll really be known for: otherwise, you're just a technician."

"This place now attracts thousands of people a year who are working for TV stations, cable stations and newspapers," he adds. "We get housewives, attorneys, doctors and dentists — people who have a part of their soul crying, 'I want to make pictures. I want to make photographs. I

want to make films. I want to make videos. I want to make a statement. I want to make a difference.'

"The Workshops began quietly and humbly. They started because I needed something. Everyone who comes to this place needs the same thing I needed then. I'm now 15 or 20 years older, and have become a bit of an expert at putting together programs that will help those people to learn and grow in their thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties: it will be in photography, filmmaking and video, documentary work, and even poetry, writing, and journal writing — all the things that we as storytellers are involved in. That's our continuing mission."

Bill Linsman directs national and international television commercials. He has been teaching his profession at the Workshops in Rockport for a dozen years.

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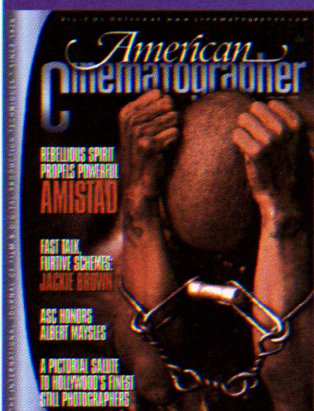


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Captain from Castile: A Hollywood Conquest

Twentieth Century Fox bankrolled 1948's most lavish adventure epic, a tale of romance and intrigue set in the days of the Spanish Inquisition.

by George Turner

In 1519, a small fleet of Cuban ships commanded by Hernando Cortez, a Spanish adventurer, landed on the coast of Mexico with about 700 soldiers and seamen. There, he founded the settlement of Veracruz and scuttled all the ships but one, which he sent to his king with the message that he was going to conquer Mexico for the glory of God and Spain. Cortez then led his forces inland against the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, now the site of Mexico City.

In the fall of 1946, a small army of 205 technicians, craftsmen and actors commanded by Henry King — a *Norte Americano* movie director — landed at Ciudad Morelia (est. 1571), 190 miles west of Mexico City. This force, however, disembarked from chartered airplanes. A fleet of 50 trucks also arrived with more than 2,000 tons of equipment, costumes, props, a dry-cleaning plant, generators, and other miscellany. The material had been sent to Mexico City on a special train in eight tightly packed baggage cars, but

had to be loaded into trucks for travel to Morelia and other locations.

This second invasion was coordinated by Twentieth Century Fox to make *Captain from Castile*, a Technicolor epic based on a best-selling novel by Samuel Shellabarger.

Darryl F. Zanuck, vice president in charge of production, believed there were two sure-fire sources of material for successful pictures: newspaper headlines and best-selling novels. Usually, he was right on both counts. However, Shellabarger's novel had several built-in hazards as a movie property: its 502 pages of small type contained enough material for several features, and the book would have to be condensed drastically without losing the elements which had made it





popular. Much of it dealt with the Spanish Inquisition, a subject predestined to a morass of censorship problems. The Conquest of Mexico by Cortez was another touchy subject. Who are the good guys? Surely not the Spanish invaders, who plundered ruthlessly under the protection of the cross and a foreign sovereign! Hardly the Aztecs, who had an advanced civilization yet waged war constantly, practiced human sacrifice on a massive scale and indulged in cannibalism!

These problems were dropped into the lap of Lamar Trotti, Zanuck's favorite screenwriter for the previous 14 years, who had recently become a producer as well. Trotti was then working on the script and preproduction of a Betty Grable picture,

Mother Wore Tights, but was so intrigued by the Cortez expedition that he took time out for a research trip to Mexico. After the Grable musical was completed, he went to work on *Captain* in earnest, following a treatment by John Tucker Battle. In a press release, Trotti said that "only one-third of the story represents action suitable for picturization. The remainder is description or accounts of various subtle thought processes. The screen version must omit everything that is not absolutely essential to the plot." Working closely with director King, Trotti delivered a finished script of just 159 pages.

Central to the screenplay is Pedro de Vargas, the son of an aristocratic Castilian family, who rescues a young peasant girl, Catana Perez,

from the lackeys and hunting dogs of Diego de Silva, inquisitor general of the Inquisition. De Silva charges the de Vargas family with heresy. Refusing to indict her family, Pedro's 12-year-old sister dies under torture. Catana's brother, a turnkey, slips a sword into Pedro's cell. When de Silva comes to his cell, Pedro defeats him in a swordfight and forces de Silva to renounce God. Then he runs the inquisitor through with his blade, leaving him for dead. Juan Garcia, an enemy of the inquisition, helps the family to escape. Pedro's parents flee to Italy while Pedro, Catana and Juan catch a ship to Cuba. There, the men enlist in the army of Pedro's father's friend, Hernando Cortez, who is about to invade Mexico. Catana joins the camp followers.

In Mexico, Pedro is injured when he rescues a hoard of jewels stolen by soldiers. De Silva now turns up very much alive, seeking to expand the Inquisition's power. He tells Cortez that Pedro tried to kill him and is wanted for murder. Cortez gives Pedro the responsibility for de Silva's safety, under threat of execution. But during the night de Silva is stabbed to death, and thus Pedro is sentenced to die. To spare Pedro from the garrote, Catana stabs young aristocrat. In the meantime, de Silva's former slave, Coatli, confesses to Father Bartolome that he murdered de Silva. Pedro recovers and joins the conquistadors' march toward Montezuma's stronghold. Catana, carrying her newborn son, follows with Father Bartolome.

One of director Henry King's favorite actors was Tyrone Power, a fellow flying enthusiast who had starred in six of King's pictures, beginning with *Lloyds of London* in 1936. During World War II, while he was on Guam serving as a Marine transport pilot, Power wrote to King that he believed the war would soon be over and asked if he had read the new novel *Captain from Castile*. The actor expressed the hope that when the war ended, he and King would

Within the dungeons of the Inquisition, Juan Garcia (Lee J. Cobb) and Pedro de Vargas (Tyrone Power), hide as Manuel (Robert Karnes) approaches.

A Hollywood Conquest

make the film version together. It happened that Darryl Zanuck had already arranged to buy rights to the book. He agreed with King that Power should have the role, and that all exteriors should be filmed in Mexico in Technicolor. When Power returned from his term of service, *Captain from Castile* was in the early stages of preparation. Meanwhile, he

book's title character, had red hair, Power refused to have his hair dyed. He got the role anyway. Zanuck had planned to borrow Jennifer Jones from Selznick International to co-star as Pedro's lover, but she proved unavailable at starting time. Linda Darnell was then slated for the part, but Zanuck decided to restart the troubled *Forever Amber* with Darnell

she chucked her career to marry eccentric millionaire Howard Hughes, and in 1971 she divorced Hughes and later married film executive Stanley Hough.

The supporting roles were filled with first-rate performers. Cesar Romero got the plum assignment as Cortez, limning a character who is ruthless yet somehow likable. Lee J. Cobb is impressive as Pedro's tragic friend, Juan Garcia, who is heroic when sober and a monster when drunk. Tall Britisher John Sutton reeks of evil as the handsome, fiendish Diego de Silva, inquisitor-general of the dreaded Inquisition. Hefty Thomas Gomez, usually cast as a villain or a shrewd detective, portrays the compassionate priest, Father Bartolome, whose role was beefed up as an antidote to the portrayal of the Inquisition. Silent star Antonio Moreno, white-haired but still handsome, plays Pedro's aristocratic father. Alan Mowbray, grotesquely made up with a hunched back and errant eye, is the expedition's astrologer-physician. Blonde Barbara Lawrence is Pedro's beautiful but unfaithful fiancée, and George Zucco — whose uniquely glittering eyes should have been a tip-off — is her treacherous father. Marc Lawrence (temporarily eluding his usual gangster roles), Bob Karnes, Jay Silverheels, Reed Hadley and Mimi Aguglia are among the other seasoned actors who are valuable assets to the show.

Only players with speaking roles were sent to Mexico. A record total of 19,500 extras, both Mexican and Indian, were all hired on location.

The costume department, supervised by Charles Le Maire, made hundreds of designs, including 20 changes of costume for Power, 16 for Cobb, 10 for Cesar Romero, and two extravagant gowns for Lawrence. Some 900 costumes were made for the extras playing Spanish soldiers, along with 200 for the Cubans, 200



Inquisitor General Diego de Silva (John Sutton) condemns Don Diego.

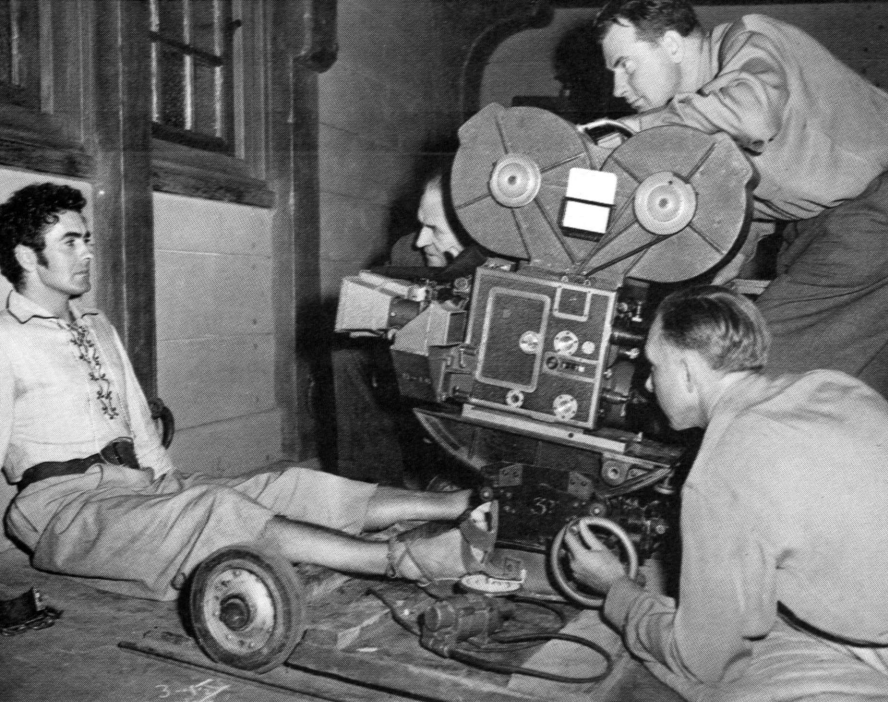
made another high-budget picture, *The Razor's Edge*.

King was the director Zanuck habitually depended upon to bring in large-scale productions such as *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Song of Bernadette* and *Wilson*. His preproduction work on *Captain from Castile* was enormous. He had the research department compile three heavy volumes of historical information. Supervising art director Richard Day put James Basevi in charge of designing the sets. Basevi, equally noted as an art director and a director of special effects, designed 80 sets to be constructed on location and 20 interiors to be built in the studio.

Although Pedro de Vargas, the

replacing Peggy Cummins in the starring role.

At the last moment, Zanuck gambled on casting Jean Peters as Catana. Peters spent the brief time before leaving for Mexico toughening her feet, because Catana goes barefoot throughout the story. (After the filming, she had to replace all of her shoes because her feet had widened.) A farm-raised student from Ohio State University who had never appeared in a movie, the green-eyed brunette proved a smart choice. An instant success, she starred in 16 pictures over the next 10 years, including *Anne of the Indies*, *Viva Zapata*, *Vicki*, *Three Coins in the Fountain* and *Broken Lance*. In 1956,



Director of photography Charles G. Clarke, ASC (top), director Henry King (at front of camera) and operator Don Anderson shoot a close-up of the imprisoned Tyrone Power. (This Technicolor camera, No. D-16, is on exhibit at the ASC's Hollywood Clubhouse.)

for the seamen, and 3,000 for the Aztecs. One craftsman, following a description found by researchers, worked for two months making a hand-tooled headdress of gold studded with jewels and crowned by 600 vulture feathers dyed a bright blue, to be worn by Gilberto Gonzales as Montezuma's nephew, Cacamatzin.

Arrangements were made to borrow priceless Aztec jeweled necklaces from the collection at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City so they could be copied by the property department artists. After 600 replicas were made, the necklaces were returned to Mexico under heavy guard. The actual necklace Cortez placed around the neck of Donna Marino — his native intrepeter and paramour — was loaned by the museum for King's reenactment of the scene with Romero and Stella Inda. Two thousand Aztec shields and 4,000 lances were made at the studio. The hammered silver spurs of the conquistadores and 5,000 pairs of sandals worn by the Aztecs were bought in Mexico. A replica of a cannon of the period was made in Mexico and 21 duplicates were made at Fox, as were 400 crossbows and numerous other props.

Flying his own plane, Henry King scouted most of the Mexican locations from the air. The first,

Morelia, was selected because its well-preserved Spanish-style churches and mansions, extravagant gardens and verdant hills resembled those of old Spain.

Charles G. Clarke, ASC and Arthur E. Arling, ASC were the project's directors of photography. "I was always rather embarrassed that they gave me equal billing with Charlie on that," Arling once admitted. "I shot very little of it. It was Charlie who was responsible for the wonderful expedition photography."

Clarke was happily at work on Fox's charming Christmas fable, *Miracle on 34th Street*, congratulating himself on this temporary escape from his "typecasting" as a photographer of outdoor action, when he was suddenly ordered to Mexico. A burly, adventurous man reminiscent of rugged screen heroes from the George Bancroft-Milton Sills mold, Clarke always felt that his real forte was studio production. On a soundstage, he could utilize his mastery of lighting, as he had on *Evelyn Prentice*, *Kind Lady*, and *Trouble For Two*. Producers, however, tended to remember his work in far-flung locations on such films as *Viva Villa*, *Tarzan and his Mate*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and *The Good Earth*. When Clarke reluctantly departed *Miracle* for Mexico City, Lloyd Ahern, ASC

completed the last two weeks of photography.

Tropical heat was a problem during most of the location work. Technicolor stock was stored in three refrigerated chests, each six feet long and four feet wide, with alternating compartments of ice and film. Continual changes in color temperature constituted the greatest challenge to the veteran cinematographer. "The hardest part of exterior photography is keeping consecutive scenes consistent," Clarke noted. "They may be shot hours or days apart, and the light changes from hour to hour and day to day in both direction and color value."

On November 19, day and night exteriors for the Spanish sequences at Morelia were begun. The company worked at this location for six weeks, much of which was devoted to filming the chase and escape action in the early part of the story. Many of these scenes required day-for-night effects.

The volcano Popocatepetl, located 40 miles southeast of Mexico City, was in eruption at the time Cortez camped nearby, but it was long dormant and snow-capped when the movie company arrived. Fortunately enough, on February 20, 1943 a new volcano — Paricutin — burst from a cornfield 180 miles west of Mexico City. Following two weeks of earthquakes, a fissure opened in the ground, spewing gas and ash four miles into the air. A cinder cone formed and within six days grew to a height of 550 feet. Lava flows destroyed the nearby villages of Paricutin and San Juan. The first volcano to form in the Western Hemisphere since 1770, it was still in violent eruption and had risen to some 3,000 feet by time of the production's arrival. (Upon its inactivity five years later, Paricutin had reached a height of 9,100 feet.)

Paricutin therefore stood in for Popocatepetl. The latter volcano was six times as high, but in a movie

A Hollywood Conquest

who would be able to tell? The town of Uruapan del Progreso, situated near the Paricutin lava beds about 300 miles from Morelia, became the second location. Before the film crew arrived, 400 men had worked for two months constructing a towering Aztec pyramid, 60 huts of various kinds, and a graveyard with 75 wooden crosses. The company then worked at the location for five weeks.

Paricutin was usually cooperative, ushering forth tremendous black clouds into the sky to create a dramatic background for the action. Sometimes, however, the dense "smoke" (actually steam and ash)

the heavy light units necessary for Technicolor photography made these scenes a trial for everybody.

One highly dramatic "night" scene was achieved ingeniously in daylight. This shows Fray Bartolome (Gomez) praying in his hut when the former Indian slave, Coatl (Jay Silverheels) steals in and whispers that it was he who murdered de Silva. "I put a 10' by 12' blue gel outside the entrance to diffuse the sun's rays and create the illusion of moonlight," Clarke later explained.

The film's most spectacular scenes were filmed at Uruapan, with the participation of 4,000 Indian

challenge the conquistadores. Fill light was provided by long banks of reflectors, and the camera dolly followed the Aztec marchers on very long tracks.

The last major location was the coastal resort city of Acapulco, where the scenes at Cortez' first New World headquarters were filmed. This included most of the romantic sequences with Pedro and Catana. Power himself piloted several flights to the site, carrying 50 key members of the company while the others traveled by land.

Ironically, Clarke found the area's exceptional beauty somewhat problematic. "We thought of the picture as a sort of historical documentary, so we kept the photography realistic," Clarke said. "Our approach had to be active, inasmuch as our story was one of action, which demanded that the camera be panning and moving most of the time. The camera was seldom still to permit compositional shots. We were careful not to glorify scenes just for the sake of pictorial beauty." In Acapulco, Clarke made his favorite "beauty shot" of the expedition, the climax of a sequence in which Pedro talks with Father Bartolome on a rocky beach. "The timing was arranged for a beautiful pictorial effect by shooting the last scene just at sunset."

As so often happens with pictures that require extensive location work, with all the vagaries of weather and other unexpected complications, *Captain from Castile* went over budget. Its 80-day shooting schedule stretched to 112 days as costs swelled to \$4.5 million.

The finished production offered the customers their money's worth. Rightly advertised as a spectacular adventure of epic proportions, the picture is filled with almost non-stop action. It chills the blood with the menacing atmosphere and the (mostly offscreen) horrors of the Inquisition, and provides eye-filling pageantry, horse-



Cortez (Cesar Romero), at head of table, entertains his captains and guests in Aztec splendor. At his left is the villainous de Silva, who glares at Pedro and Father Barolome (Thomas Gomez), at right.

blotted out the location's sunlight. King and Clarke cleverly took advantage of these times to make night scenes. Power spent Sundays flying members of the company over the gaping crater.

Curiously enough, King elected to film the numerous interiors in the temples and huts on location rather than at the studio. He had done this successfully before, most notably in its entirety in the Florida Keys. Clarke was plagued by the difficulties of lighting inside the claustrophobic temples. The intense heat caused by

extras in full Aztec regalia. The method of distributing costumes and weapons had been planned well in advance. The prop and wardrobe people began preparation before dawn, working by candlelight. The Aztec breech cloths had been made in five colors: white, red, yellow, green and brown. The extras were divided into five groups of 800, each of which was assigned a different color. Members of each group filed past in turn, and were issued matching shields and lances. In three hours, all were ready to perform the scenes of Montezuma's troops moving to

back chases, romance, fights on land and sea, revenge and mystery. It also delivers a stirring musical score by Alfred Newman, head of Fox's music department and considered by many musicians to have been the finest composer and conductor in films. Much of the score has been recorded several times, and the rousing triumphal march, titled "Conquest," has become part of the symphonic repertoire.

Unfortunately, the year of *Captain from Castile's* release — 1948 — was one in which the American movie industry was suffering a multitude of debilitating crises. The government was pressing demands that production companies divest themselves of their theater interests — a near-death blow to theater chain companies like Fox, RKO, MGM and Paramount. The British Board of Trade almost doubled its quota law to require that

45 percent of features shown in English theaters had to be English-made, and slapped an *ad valorem* tax on imported films that let Britain keep 75 percent of American earnings. Many foreign markets were cut off altogether, and more than \$50 million in American film industry funds were frozen in various nations. Many local governments suddenly discovered the joy of levying amusement taxes on theaters. It was also the year of the "Red Hunt" by the House Un-American Activities Committee headed by Rep. J. Parnell Thomas. So-called "costume" pictures fell out of favor at the time, so much so that Columbia called back its posters on *The Loves of Carmen* and replaced them with new art depicting Rita Hayworth and Glenn Ford in modern dress. Meanwhile, the infant television industry suddenly began to make an impact on theater attendance, with many former moviego-



Pedro demands that de Silva renounce God — then runs him through.

ers staying home nights, their eyes focused on fuzzy black-and-white images on six-inch screens.

With these and other problems bedeviling the industry in a single, catastrophic year, gross box-office receipts in the U.S. dropped 25 percent. Even so, *Captain from Castile* brought in a lot of money, but failed to recoup its cost. At a time when domestic receipts were all that

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Cortez leads his army toward the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan.

really mattered, the average nationwide admission price was 35 cents for adults and a dime for children under 12. One fact was inescapable: there was no way that a \$4.5 million movie could turn a profit in 1948.

Charles Clarke believed that the picture itself suffered the fatal flaw of being less effective than it could have been due to premature cessation of the story. "It was a magnificent production with plenty of exciting scenes," he allowed, "but I was always unhappy with it because the picture ended before it reached the climax it was building to: the conquest of Mexico City. We didn't really get to finish the picture." ■

Credits

A Twentieth Century Fox picture presented by Darryl F. Zanuck; color by Technicolor; directed by Henry King; produced by Lamar Trotti; screenplay by Lamar Trotti, from the novel by Samuel Shellabarger; musical direction, Alfred Newman; directors of photography, Charles G. Clarke, ASC and Arthur E. Arling, ASC; art direction, Richard Day, James Basevi; set decorations, Thomas Little; Technicolor director, Natalie Kalmus; associate, Richard Mueller; film editor, Barbara McLean; wardrobe direction, Charles Le Maire; second-unit director,

Robert D. Webb; orchestral arrangements, Edward Powell; makeup artist, Ben Nye; special photographic effects, Fred Sersen; sound, Winston H. Leverett, Roger Heman; screen treatment, John Tucker Battle; assistant directors, William Eckhart, Henry Weinberger; camera operator, Don Anderson; dance director, Hermes Pan; Western Electric recording. Running time, 140 min. Released January, 1948.

Pedro de Vargas, Tyrone Power; Catana Perez, Jean Peters; Cortez, Cesar Romero; Juan Garcia, Lee J. Cobb; Diego de Silva, John Sutton; Don Francisco, Antonio Moreno; Father Bartolome, Thomas Gomez; Botello, Alan Mowbray; Luisa, Barbara Lawrence; Marquise de Caravajal, George Zucco; Captain Alvarado, Roy Roberts; Corio, Marc Lawrence; Manuel, Robert Karnes; Soler, Fred Libby; Dona Maria, Virginia Brissac; Coatl, Jay Silverheels; Cermeno, John Laurenz; Mercedes, Dolly Arriaga; Escudero, Reed Hadley; Donna Marino, Stella Inda; De Lora, John Burton; Hernandez, Mimi Aguglia; Sancho Lopez, Chris-Pin Martin; Crier, Edward Mundy; Reyes, Robert Adler; Aztec Ambassador, Gilberto Gonzales; Aztec, Ramon Sanchez; Captain Sandoval, Harry Carter; Sailor, Bud Wolfe; Singer, David Cato.

Some information for this article was furnished by Marc Lawrence, the late Arthur E. Arling, ASC, and the late Charles G. Clarke, ASC.

On the Spot

Honda's Return to Tomorrow

by Mary Hardesty

When director of photography Joe Murray was asked to design a nostalgic look for Honda's "Bike of Tomorrow" campaign, his biggest dilemma was how best to achieve a retro veneer. "Do you scratch the film and make it look old, grainy and nasty, or do you want it to look the way the 1930s newsreels looked when they came out, which was actually pretty?" the director/cinematographer asks, referring to the 30-second "Newsreel" spot. "Interestingly, after looking at many newsreels of the time, the truth is that some are very rough and others are inordinately beautiful. You can tell the difference between the ones done by filmmakers and those shot by news cameramen. The look of a luminous black-and-white print was the direction I took with it."

The commercial plays out as though it is a vintage newsreel reporting on a glittery press conference Honda holds to introduce its "Bike of Tomorrow." The cycle revealed is actually Honda's present-day Shadow Aero, whose sleek styling stems from that period's popular Art Deco designs. "The motorcycle has all the features of a modern bike, but the agency felt that placing it in a 1930s environment would draw attention to the styling cues that relate it to the elegance of a bygone era," states Murray.

After a one-second montage title card displaying actual period footage, the spot cuts to a Honda spokesman and a smiling model in a bathing suit who removes a covering from the cycle. When the Aero is unveiled, the audience gasps and camera flashbulbs crackle. A briskly paced montage of close-ups follows as the spokesman, who resembles Harry Truman, calls the bike's design "some-

thing right out of the pages of science-fiction." The spot ends with a re-created Thirties-style Honda logo superimposed over a globe with the motorcycle orbiting around it.

"We had a lot of fun with the spot," Murray attests. "Before shooting, I made several decisions, one of which was to stay fairly close to the lexicon of Thirties filmmaking style, meaning that I didn't use 500mm lenses. I went with the Zeiss standard-speed kit, which consists of 16, 24, 35, 50, 85 and 100mm lenses, on an Arriflex BL-4. [Hewing] to classic lens choices helped to maintain the newsreel look. Also, lenses didn't have an anti-halation coating back then, meaning that when the light went through the film emulsion, it would sometimes hit the back of the lens and scatter: this gave a wrap-around high-light and glow to the images. I tried to recreate that look by using netting on the back of the lens."

Shot in an old warehouse in Pasadena, California, redressed as sparkling new 1930s Honda plant, the commercial was completed with only one pre-lighting day and one shooting day. The production spared no effort to ensure the authenticity of every detail. For example, an exhaustive search to find 1930s-style photographic flash bulbs — which are no longer manufactured — was undertaken in order to equip the spot's realistic "press" people. "When we shot the mid-ground plate, we flashed it so it was timed to the actors' onscreen flashbulbs going off," explains Murray. "This trick helped tie together the foreground, middle and background plates."

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commercial as well. The spot is rife with old-fashioned optical effects such as continuity errors and editing mistakes to mimic the look of a film made 60 years ago. And although the ad was photographed with color film — Kodak's Vision 200T 5274 — it is airing in black-and-white. "We lit for black-and-white," says Murray, who takes issue with those who denounce shooting in color and transferring the resulting footage to black-and-white. "If you're shooting outside in the desert, for example, and you want chalky white skies or really white skin tones, shooting color wouldn't work, but this was supposed to be inside a 1930s industrial factory. You can make color film look like black-and-white — the trick is in the telecine. If you play with the color luminance, you can make it look as if it was shot on black-and-white stock. I used a great editor, William Bullen, who did things like disturbing the film's registration and removing footage so it would look as if the film skips. He chopped it just a bit to give it a hand-made quality, as if the film was jumping in the gate of the projector." Murray also praised the work of his key grip, John London, and gaffer, Al Demayo.

During the Thirties, dolly shots were rare and cameras were generally locked down on tripods, historical facts which restricted Murray's camera positioning. He solved the problem by placing the motorcycle on a revolving turntable. "Since the camera couldn't move," states Murray, who found from his research that 1930s industrial car and bike displays often used turntables. "Not only did it allow us to show off the bike to its best advantage without violating the language of the 1930s newsreel, but I found that by hitting the bike with hard lights, we got all these really wonderful reflections, sparkles and flares off of it in all the appropriate places. Normally, you wouldn't do that when shooting a car or sheet metal, but it worked beautifully for this spot. With black-and-white you don't have color contrast going, so everything is done with gradation contrast."

Controlling and maintaining the same luminance level throughout the

course of the day inside the building took the most time for Murray's busy crew. "The windows were very large, so on my pre-light day I did a light study using a computer that charts the sun's direction," Murray recalls. "I also had a production assistant shoot stills at key times of the day. Like most cinematographers, I try to shoot the wider shots first or at the most optimal time, and then move on to the close-ups, for better control. We controlled the light level by starting out with heavy neutral-density film on the windows and removing it bit by bit at a rate determined by my pre-light day studies."

One of the shoot's more interesting aspects entailed making 60 period costumed extras appear to be 600. The effect was achieved by filming and moving the extras eight times. Murray explains, "We had to shoot that sequence with a locked camera, but that worked fine for our purposes since it was supposed to feel like the 1930s. Normally, a locked camera would tend to suggest a matte shot, but it worked in our favor this time. Originally, I thought about using a greenscreen to shoot, but the post guys said it would be faster, cheaper and better to do it with the new luminance matting techniques in post. We made eight passes — each time moving the extras and taking their hats on and off. We even choreographed it so people were in the forefront and walking in front of the lens, creating several different planes to ensure that the shots had depth. Even though we didn't use motion control, I think the crowd scenes came out looking very organic."

CREDITS

Spot: "Newsreel"

Length: 30 and 60 seconds

Client: American Honda Motor Company, Inc.

Director/Director of photography:

Joe Murray

Production Company:

Shadowrock Productions

Agency:

Dailey & Associates

Editing Company: Bedlam

Post Facility: Post Logic

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compiled by **Andrew O. Thompson**

Photos by David E. Williams

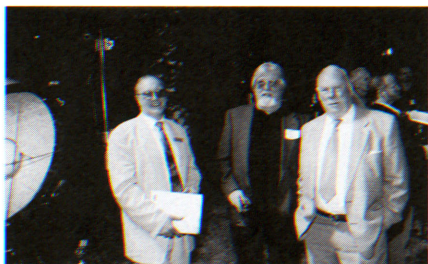


Festival of Lights by David E. Williams

Members of the American Society of Cinematographers and their guests were treated to a grand display of new and unique lighting fixtures at the ASC Hollywood Clubhouse on January 26. Organized by Robert Primes, ASC (with welcomed help from Society fellows Laszlo Kovacs and Vilmos Zsigmond), the demonstration was held outdoors under a black starry sky, with eight respective companies blasting back the darkness with a multitude of diverse lighting instruments.

The exhibition also attracted the interest of the ASC's many neighbors along Orange Drive, especially as some of the larger fixtures came into play and brightened up large swaths of the Los Angeles landscape.

The show got off to an exotic start as Scott Greene, the rental department head at **HydroFlex**, took center stage to reveal the firm's latest underwater lighting gear. First up was the new compact and lightweight HydroPar 2500 SE HMI. The bright fixture was submerged in a large fish tank — stressing its watertight capabilities and bathing the attentive attendees in an aqua glow. Greene went



on to explain the lamp's interchangeable Fresnel lens system, which quickly alters its beam pattern and can be utilized even underwater. Depth rated to 150', the 2500 SE is built for continuous operation below water or timed intervals above water and weighs 30 pounds (4 pounds in saltwater).

Greene then exhibited an array of HydroFlex's new waterproof Kino Flo fixtures (3200°K, 5600°K and UV), as well as several watertight light meter cases.

Tony Stefani of **Electronic Theater Controls (ETC)** offered a remarkable demonstration of the 1K CE Source Four ellipsoidal spotlight — projecting sharply defined gobo patterns on the side of a large building several hundred yards away. Stefani explained that the Source Four was developed around Entertec's HPL compact filament lamp. The HPL produces more light using less energy by utilizing its smaller filament for more efficient light collection.



The Source Four's faceted glass reflector was computer-designed to give the lamp optimum light collection. A dichroic coating is applied to the reflector to increase reflectivity and remove up to 90 percent of the heat from the beam. The gate stays cool, extending shutter and gobo life. Unique lenses are used in Source Four's sophisticated optical system to provide a very even, clean, white field as well as precise shutter cuts and pattern projection.

Stefani additionally demonstrated the compact 575-watt Source Four Par, which delivers a smooth even field and equal or better light output than 1,000W Par 64s. The ETC Par comes with a set of four snap-in lenses which mount in a cool, rotating ring — making the fixture a true multi-purpose tool.

Joe Tawil, an ASC associate

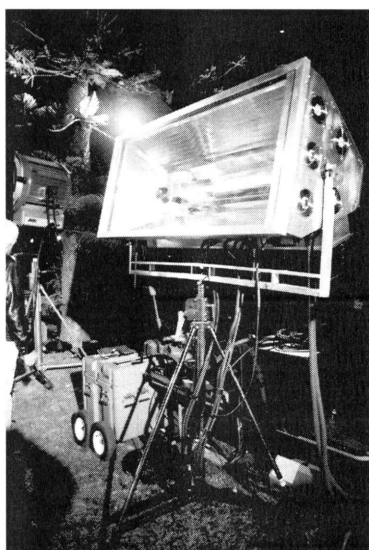
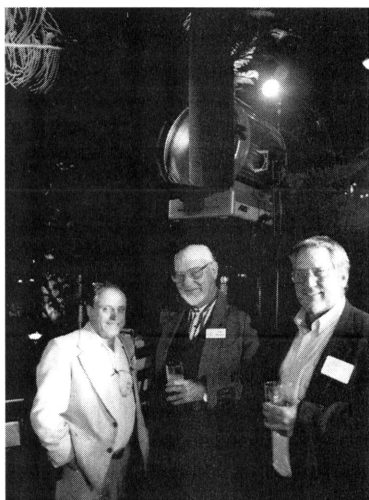
Clockwise from top left: ASC members Robert Byrne (far left) and Jack Green (second from right) observe Arriflex's demonstration of the Flex Light Liquid Optic System; assorted sources illuminate the ASC Clubhouse; Bob Primes, ASC (far left) inspects ETC's wares; Laszlo Kovacs, ASC is flanked by Aurasoft's Derek C. Lightbox (left) and Barry Parker.

Clockwise from top left: HydroFlex head Pete Romano demonstrates his company's waterproof Kino Flos to ASC associate member and Kino Flo president Frieder Hochheim; Howard A. Anderson, ASC is joined by son Howard Anderson III (right) and ASC associate Steven Manios, Sr. (left); the mighty 50K built by Lightning Strikes.



member and owner of **The Great American Market (GAM)**, was then brought up to demonstrate the new SPE-6 Flickermaster. Rigged to a 2K lamp fitted with a pack of red, orange and straw gels, the device was quickly and easily programmed to create a variety of fire flicker and strobe effects, projected on a large silk across the parking lot. The SPE-6 also features a 0-100 percent dimmer control, and the solid-state electronics are fully filtered to minimize lamp noise. The SPE-6 is intended for incandescent fixtures only and has a maximum capacity of 2000 watts.

Distributed internationally by **Optex and Bogen**, the unique **Aurasoft** series of softlights was introduced by the fixture's inventor, Dereck C. Lightbock, who, accompanied by company general manager Barry Parker, flew in from England specifically for the ASC event. Poised upon towering Avenger light stands, several Aurasofts had been used throughout the evening to illuminate the entire ASC compound, but it was now time for Lightbock to formally introduce his creation to the audience. As he explained, the Aurasoft 600 is available with interchangeable 1K/2K/3K tungsten halogen heads, as well as 1.2K and 2.5K 5600°K MSR heads, each compatible with its 600mm-wide reflector. The Aurasoft 800 is available with interchangeable 2K/4K tungsten halogen



heads, as well as 2.5K and 4K 5600°K MSR heads, each compatible with its 800mm-wide reflector.

The Aurasoft reflector surface consists of thousands of tiny spherical convex mirrors, each bouncing angled light across the path of the adjoining mirror. The thousands of individual light beams criss-cross one another and reduce the directness of the light, creating an effect of surprisingly natural softness. To enhance this effect and to minimize interference from moiré patterns, the thousands of individual mirrors have been employed in a range of different diameters, with minimum flat areas between mirrors.

The reflector is made of injection-molded high-temperature polymer plastic, coated with high-temperature lacquer to form a substrate base, and

then flash aluminized in a vacuum chamber. The overall design is part spherical, part conical to achieve desired spread of about 120 degrees and minimize depth, which makes the Aurasoft particularly useful in confined areas on location. An air gap between the reflector and the main lamp housing ensures that the outer shell stays cool.

ASC associate member Larry Mole Parker, vice president of sales at **Mole-Richardson Co.**, made a strong impression on the audience with his company's new 24K tungsten lamp and a prototype 12K HMI Par. The 24,000-watt light is actually a reworked version of the company's popular 20K fitted with a 24K globe, while the 12,000-watt Par is an entirely new design that is currently being field-tested before going onto production. The crowd was quite impressed with the 12K Par's punch, as well as the 24K's brute strength. Unfortunately, no further specifications on either lamp were available at press time, but expect to read more about them in an upcoming issue of *AC*.

Arriflex was represented by lighting division manager John Gresch, who utilized several assistants to fully demonstrate the diverse array of attachment accessories available for the highly portable Arrilux 125W HMI Pocket Par. The Flex Light Liquid Optic System uses a special collection lens to gather and direct light through the liquid-filled optic cable into the focusing lens. When shooting macro photography, the Flex Light produces more than 7,000 foot-candles at two feet from the subject with a remarkably low level of heat transmission; this feature makes the system useful for delicate food photography or precise tabletop applications. Light intensity can be varied by focusing the Par or adjusted via the electronic ballast's built-in dimmer. There are two tube lengths available — 1.5m or 3m.

Consisting primarily of a rugged cast-acrylic tube, the Lite Pipe transforms the Pocket Par's beam into a 3' wand of smooth HMI illumination. With no color shift, the Light Pipe provides a reliable, soft daylight source and comes with a 180-degree shade which can rotate

along the tube to control illumination.

The Pattern Projection Lenses produce sharp, high-quality designs using M-size patterns. The lenses attach easily to the front of the Par and are available in 75, 100, 150 and 200mm sizes.

Lightning Strikes president David Pringle concluded the evening by introducing new items from his company's arsenal, as well as several lamps from **LP Associates, Inc.**, as demonstrated by president Larry Pincus. The first fixture was LPA's SoftSun Direct 2.2, a 5600°K lamp that, as Pringle suggested, "picks up where a Kino Flo leaves off." Instead of depending on a bounce effect to soften its output, the SoftSun provides broad soft output directly from the source, a unique long HE Gas discharge arc lamp that resembles a fluorescent tube. The 2.2K fixture is flicker-free and silent, and dimmable to 25 percent output with no color shift.

Pincus then revealed LPA's line of Sunflash 2470 and Sunstick 2420 24-watt metal-halide flashlights, which consume 1/3 the power of a typical 100-watt halogen incandescent bulb while still delivering constant 5500°K daylight. Though the Sunflash has a pigtail power umbilical, the Sunstick is fully self-contained and features a rechargeable Nicad battery pack.

Pringle electrified the crowd with several variations of the award-winning Lightning Strikes heads, including a 250K unit running off a new Thundervoltz Power Pack — which makes the fixture fully portable and eliminates the need for a generator or house power. The huge battery supply weighs in at 1,000 lbs. and is housed in twin rolling cases.

To cap off the evening, Pringle then introduced a prototype 50,000-watt continuous-discharge lamp, which had been completed just a few hours before its delivery to the ASC. Fitted with numerous fans for heat dispersal, the gleaming head features a wide face covered with clear glass. With several members of the audience noting that size sometimes does matter, the 50K was activated. Unlike other very large sources, the lamp's output was surpris-



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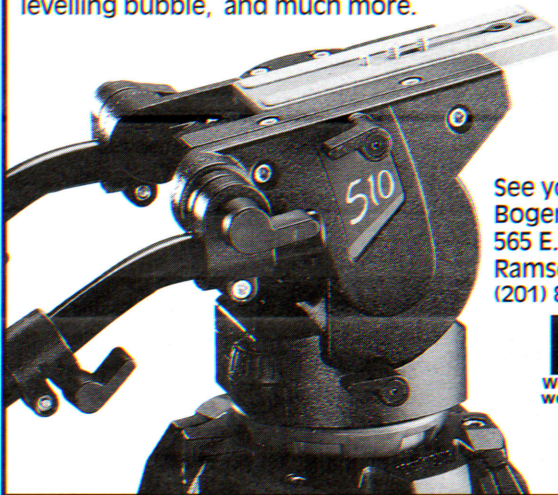
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ingly soft, casting out a wide swath of flicker-free 5600°K light that turned night into day. Everyone was tremendously impressed, but there is no word as to when this behemoth will be available for rental or purchase. At press time, Lightning Strikes could not provide further technical specs on this remarkable fixture; expect more information in a future issue of AC.

The exhibition ended with Robert Primes offering his thanks to all of the evening's participants, with special praise reserved for Hollywood Rental Co, who made the event technically possible by cabling the entire setup and providing generator service.

Hydroflex, (310) 301-8187, fax (310) 821-9886, website www.hydroflex.com; Electronic Theater Controls, (608) 831-4116, fax (608) 836-1736, website, www.etcconnect.com; Great American Market, (213) 461-1200, fax (213) 461-4308; Mole-Richardson Co., (213) 851-0111, fax (213) 851-5593, website www.mole.com; Aurasoft/Bogen (201) 818-9500, fax (201) 818-9177, website www.bogenphoto.com; Arriflex, (818) 848-4028, fax (818) 841-7070; Lightning Strikes, (213) 461-6361, fax, (213) 461-3067, website, www.lightningstrikes.com; LP Associates, Inc., (213) 462-4714, fax (213) 462-7584.

Digital Camcorder

Canon's XL1 digital camcorder features a 16X XL lens and also accommodates an optional 3X wide-angle lens and a 1.6X extender. The focal length of the 16X zoom lens is 5.5mm to 88mm, which is a 35mm focal length equivalent of 39.6mm to 633.6mm. The lens internally incorporates high-speed motors for auto-focus and zooming, a six-blade iris, and 1.5 neutral density filter. Externally, this lens provides a variable-speed zoom, manual zoom, manual-focus control options and a one-push auto-focus button. The new SuperRange optical image stabilizer goes one step further using a motion vector to examine the image after it is received by the CCD; the process significantly improves performance for low-frequency vibration, which effectively eliminates image

shake from lower than 1Hz to over 20Hz.

The XL1 also offers EOS 35mm camera users the expanded option of using EOS lenses with an optional EF to XL mount adapter. Therefore, the potential focal range of the XL1 in 35mm camera equivalents — from extreme wide to super telephoto — is 24mm to 17,280mm (EF 1200mm lens and Extender EF 2X).

The XL1 uses 3-CCD image sensors to create true-to-life quality images; each CCD processes a primary color separately — red, blue and green — with a beam-splitting prism precisely excising the light passing through the lens into individual color components. The unit's Pixel Shift technology (using 270,000-pixel CCDs) achieves 530 lines of resolution, lending the video signal a wide dynamic range, low color noise, increased diagonal resolution, a high signal-to-noise ratio and reduced vertical smear. Recording options include Frame Movie mode (30 high-resolution still frames per second), Normal Movie mode (at 500 lines of resolution) and Digital Photo mode (a still-frame capture of approximately six seconds). For SLR-style flash photography, the Digital Photo mode will accommodate the Canon Speedlite 380EX E-TTL flash using an optional FA-100 flash adapter.

In terms of audio, the unit offers 16-bit and two 12-bit modes and also features simultaneous recording on four channels as well as independent signal output. Also incorporated are a variety of audio input terminals with independent level controls, including one stereo mini-jack and two pairs of stereo RCA jacks. For professional microphones, Canon's MA-100 microphone adapter/shoulder pad permits the use of two XLR-type microphones.

For added versatility in accommodating a variety of shooting positions, the camera offers a shoulder mount design and carrying handle, the latter featuring an additional stop/start switch and zoom control for dual-action shooting. The XL1's other performance features include the IEEE 1394 digital connector (which facilitates computer-operated data transmission, editing, still-image capture and

multimedia applications), exposure control, multi-view finder, slow-speed shutter, zebra-pattern and color-bar generator, date and time code, self-timer, digital fader and widescreen TV effect, remote control, and lithium-ion power supply. The unit itself weighs approximately 6lbs., 5 oz.

Canon, (516) 328-5145, website: www.canondv.com.

HMI Light Kits

Cinemills Corporation now offers its new CMC Wally Light Kits, available in both 200W and 575W all-in-one light-weight heads, with an electronic flicker-free ballast. The kits consist of a four-piece lens set, Fresnel lens, barn door, Chimera lightbank and ring, globe and custom carrying case. The electronic ballast is quiet and eliminates flickering and strobing up to 10,000 fps.

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ELMO has introduced its new EV-6000AF Visual Presenter which features a built-in Dual Camera System that enables users to switch from a document to face image using the factory-supplied mouse or remote control. This eliminates the need to physically rotate the top camera position each time. In addition to the top camera, the EV-6000AF features a built-in sub camera which — when mounted on the presenter base — can



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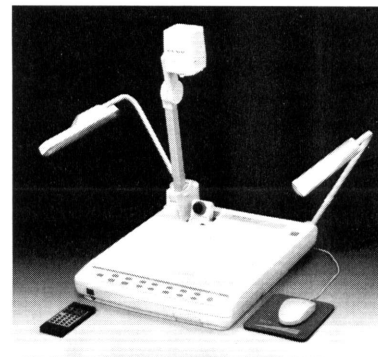
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be used as a stationary face camera when mounted to the presenter face, or can be used as a handheld camera when attached to the supplied 1.5m cable. Other innovations include digital signal processing technology, built-in seven frame image memory in JPEG format, built-in electronic arrow pointer, two-speed 12X optical lens zoom plus 2X digital zoom with a max of 24X zoom. The wireless (IR) remote control and mouse control pointer movement scroll the image in digital zoom mode.

The unit also permits freeze frames and features an electronic shutter from 1/100 to 1/10,000 of a second, video, audio, microphone and sync inputs and outputs, an RS232C external control as well as composite, S-video and RGB video outputs. The unit delivers more than 470 horizontal lines of resolution; all functions are automatic or power-controlled, the close-up detail lens is a built-in "flip-up" design, higher 48dB signal-to-noise ratio for improved picture quality, and an on-screen menu with a list of functions settings. The post is positioned diagonally to permit larger materials to be placed on the stage. The unit folds flat and measures approximately 15.7" x 21.3" x 6.5" and stands 24" high in the upright position and weighs 19.8 pounds.

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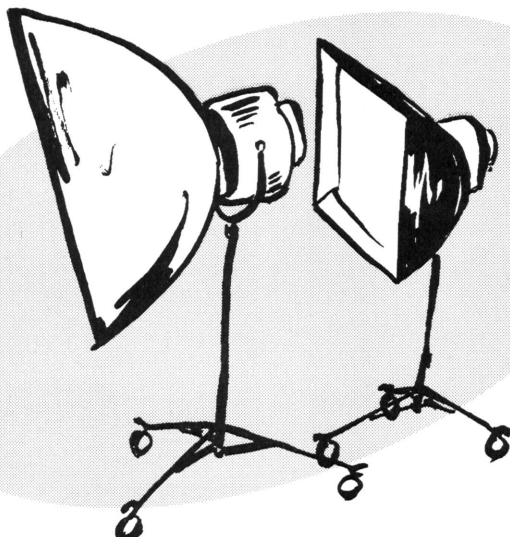
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designed to intercept the variety of signals common in multicore camera cables: the signal is then buffered, amplified and equalized for the length of cable required. The user can set the drive for any length up to 300'; the unit is designed as a coupler and can be used anywhere in the cable path or to link two shorter length cables together or drive any fixed length, again up to 300'. To facilitate usage, the CSP-300 utilizes power directly from the cable or the

provided 12V DC power supply. It can also run on 12V DC batteries for difficult field applications. All video signals — except viewfinder return signals — are processed based on the connector and type of camera

cable ordered. The unit is available in all the multicore configurations available, from 14- to 28-pin.

Also offered is the CHEK-10, a small belt-pack tool which serves as a video/audio detector and earphone amp all in a single battery-powered unit. This device will detect composite, luminance or component video signals and turn on an LED to indicate that the signal exists; the signal can be fed into the CHEK-10 and looped out to additional equipment if required. Audio signals are also detected at levels as low as .5Vpp and an LED will confirm its existence; both systems can be used at the same time. An earphone amp is provided to a 1/4" phone jack for headset monitoring of audio signals.

TecNec, (800) 534-0909, fax (800) 252-5329, e-mail: tecnecc@tecnecc.com.

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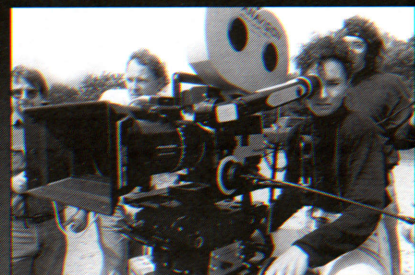

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Points East

Dog Days in the East Village

by Eric Rudolph

A gang of impoverished twentysomething women in New York's East Village stumble into a life of crime in writer/director/actor Eve Annenberg's independent first feature *Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All-Girl Bookie Joint*. This witty and moving film follows the fate of Leila Wascowicz (Pam Columbus), a young woman suffering from such an extreme case of low self-esteem that she dons \$450 designer eyewear while existing on egg rolls for months at a time. A financial crisis arises, however, when her mother dies and Leila has to pay for the funeral.

A white knight of sorts appears in the form of Sammie (Toby Huss), who is referred to as "a nice Jewish criminal." Leila is initially drawn to Sammie romantically even though, or perhaps because, he has no interest in her. But he does need people to run an illegal sports betting operation, and Leila and her three underemployed roommates seem to fit the bill. Soon, cash money is pouring in, but the girls tire of working long hours in their ramshackle tenement kitchen, and grow concerned about the morality of their profession. Eventually they get arrested, and just before being released on bail the four roomies realize that their bookie skills could be best applied to the straight job market. (The wispy-voiced hyphenate Annenberg makes a charming appearance as Gypsy, the newest roommate, who is on a first-name basis with the jailers after previous incarcerations.)

The 32-year-old director, who earned an acting degree from Juilliard and filmmaking credentials from Columbia University, originally set out to make a serious family drama for her

directorial debut. When that film fell apart after production had already begun, she dealt with her devastation through laughter. "At that point, my mind snapped," she says. "All I could think about was wacky comedy." Writing *Dogs* proved therapeutic, but Annenberg soon found her production budget estimate of \$50,000 — financed by student loans and limited partnerships — to be too low by half.

Dogs survived thanks to crucial financial boosts from several individuals who saw short pieces of the film, including Marcia Kirkley, former director of acquisitions for October Films, who anted up some \$34,000 in completion funds from her credit cards and became the film's executive producer. "I was fortunate that Marcia came in, or I would have had to go-go dance my way from rough cut to answer print," quips Annenberg. More angels appeared in the form of Carol Dean of New York's Studio Film & Tape, who contributed \$1,000 of fresh Fuji stock after seeing some

of the film, and Danielle Germano of the Hit Factory recording studio, who offered the use of music scoring facilities. After 17 months of on-again-off-again shooting, *Dogs* wrapped principal photography with an ultimate cost somewhere between \$80,000 and \$100,000. Annenberg gives a great deal of credit to her producer, Heather D. Adamo, then a 24-year-old Columbia University film student, for the films

successful completion.

Annenberg says that her strict conservatory training at Juilliard helped her to maintain cohesion during a rather erratic shoot. "Because we filmed off and on over 17 months, we couldn't concern ourselves with continuity," she explains. "I couldn't tell people not to change their hair over that period of time. When those problems cropped up, we resorted to wigs." More serious situations arose during the protracted filming period. "Melody Beal's mother died during one of our longer continuous periods of filming. I could not shoot around her; I had to shut down for a week and I lost \$5,000. After a week, Melody was back, sitting in a jail cell that smelled of urine, playing lines about her fictional mother."

Dogs was photographed by both Joe Foley and Wolfgang Held. Foley, 30, who shot a bit more of the film than Held, explains that the 16mm production was shot with whatever camera gear the filmmakers could beg and borrow. "We used an Eclair NPR, an Aaton XLR, an Arriflex SR and BL and whatever lenses came along with the cameras. It's not the best way to do things, but it is a way to get a feature shot for no money." Fresh



Kodak stock was used to film most of *Dogs*; short ends were used only sparingly. Lighting gear and soundstage space were borrowed from Columbia University and elsewhere. "The lights we used most often were three 2Ks borrowed from Columbia, where I had worked. Occasionally we would get some 4Ks and some Tweenies and Inkies. One day after a long *Dogs* shoot, I ran into an acquaintance on the subway

Pamela Gray, Pam Columbus, writer/director Eve Annenberg and Melody Beal portray cash-strapped East Village roommates who become bookies in *Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All-Girl Bookie Joint*.

and he said 'I'm working at a lighting house; call me if you need to borrow anything.' We did."

Since no one was getting paid, Foley's camera team changed frequently, sometimes daily. "Whatever friends of mine or Eve's who could come and work a day or two, that was my team," he explains. "In 10 days I might have had 10 different gaffers and four different ACs."

The perils of independent production did provide occasional serendipities, however. A New York bar was secured for a scene in which the girls console a distraught Gypsy. "After we'd shot one of our scheduled two days there, the owner, who had to stay with us in the bar until 2 a.m., decided we shouldn't come back," Foley recalls. "Fortunately we had gotten to the point in the scene where the girls' mothers magically appear. We shot the rest [of this sequence] at the Columbia University soundstage, with a limbo background, which helped distinguish the fantasy section from the reality parts of the bar scene."

Though *Dogs* has had several American theatrical runs, the film has enjoyed most of its theatrical success overseas. "It was accepted at the 1996 Rotterdam Film Festival," says Annenberg with pride. "Our little 16mm print represented the only American feature in competition there. From Rotterdam, it was sold in Germany, France and England; ARD in Germany sold *Dogs* in Italy, Australia, Japan and Taiwan. At one point it was playing in three theaters at once in Paris."

Since then, Annenberg has seen a couple of development deals come and go. She's currently trying to decide whether she should seek a studio deal for her second feature, *The Last Shift* (written with Stephanie Sharpe), which her agent describes as "*Mystic Pizza* in Times Square, but with more sex and drugs." Meanwhile, the diminutive Annenberg is managing two downtown restaurants. At presstime, however, Miramax chief Harvey Weinstein was set to screen the sole 35mm print of *Dogs*, which can also be seen on The Sundance Channel in the upcoming weeks. ■

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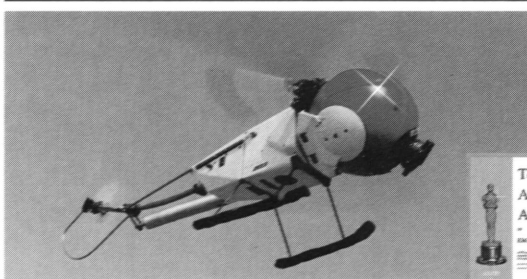
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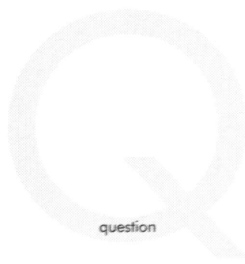
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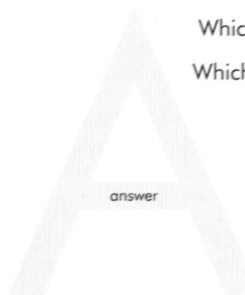
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Books in Review

by George Turner

The British Cinematographer

by Duncan Petrie
British Film Institute,
182 pps., paperback,
\$22.50

Sometime during the silent era and the "quota-quickie" years of the 1930s, British cinematography developed a reputation for being flat and unimaginative. England's most famous director, Alfred Hitchcock, commented on the bad state of British cinematography when he began his directorial career, noting that he studied German and American films to learn camera technique. Even the excellent work of Jack Cox and Bernard Knowles in Hitchcock's early films did little to dispel the blot. A softening of this view came when Georges Perinal won an American Oscar for *The Thief of Bagdad*, the first British movie to be given an Academy Award for cinematography.

Even in recent years, the reputation of British camera art retains vestigial tarnish, as evidenced by the published remarks of such filmmakers as French cineaste François Truffaut ("... there's something about England that's anticinematic... a certain incompatibility between the terms 'cinema' and 'Britain'") and Indian auteur Satyajit Ray ("I do not think the British are temperamentally equipped to make the best use of the movie camera"). Perhaps the naysayers should have paid more attention to the early work of, say, Freddie Young, Guy Green, Mutz Greenbaum (a.k.a. Max Greene), Douglas Slocombe, Geoffrey Unsworth, Robert Krasker, Ronald Neame, Ossie Morris, Jack Hildyard, Jack Cardiff, Freddie Francis (see profile in this issue), Arthur Grant

and others who were doing fine work even during the industry's darker days.

Petrie, of the University of Exeter, certainly gives such men their due in this small but well-filled volume. The first 66 pages trace the development of cinematography in England, beginning with the first British cinematographer — Birt Acres, who was filming sporting events with a homemade movie camera as early as 1895 — up until present cameramen. Both artistic and technical achievements receive their due, as do the contributions of visiting artists from America and Europe. The author apologizes for not having space to include wider coverage of visual effects, a field which owes much to innovations from Britain.

Biographical sketches, interviews and filmographies of more than 50 British cinematographers (as well as the more influential outsiders who have worked in England) make up the bulk of the text. This is a right good show from the BFI, distributed in the U.S. by the Indiana University Press. Illustrations are rather sparse, but choice.

The British Cinema Book

edited by Robert Murphy
British Film Institute,
300 pps., cloth \$60,
paper, \$24.95

This collection of essays by two dozen specialists is another interesting BFI tome about English movies. Most of the writers are academics, some of whom provide an overdose of personal pronouns; they are very informative, however, and provide fascinating insights into the history and attributes of the industry. These experts cover a wide range of topics, from the silent film period to predictions of the future; in

between are reports on the growth of studios, the era of quota-quickies, the documentary movement, the extravagant costume melodramas and psychological thrillers of World War II and after, and the exciting new trends of later years.

Topics also receiving ample due include censorship, the contributions of Europeans fleeing the Third Reich, the changing roles of women in the Sixties, British comedy traditions, horror films, and the post-World War II emergence of more dynamic film heroes. Several essays sound out the distinctive specialties of various studios: the romanticism at Gainsborough; the opulence and high professionalism at Korda-London Films; the refreshing enthusiasm of Twickenham's low-cost production makers; the tightly budgeted but somehow awesome results of Hammer horror; and the delightfully fresh thinking evident at Ealing.

The book's 25 chapters provide an abundance of information and opinions. It is interesting that the editor permitted the writers to retain their widely varying viewpoints and attitudes; the result is an effectively even-handed overview of the film industry.

The Films of Peter Greenaway

by Amy Lawrence
Cambridge University Press,
235 pps., hardback, \$54.95;
paper, \$15.95

The Films of Peter Greenaway is a recent entry in Cambridge University's Film Classics series, which offers revisionist studies of well-known filmmakers, past and present. Previous numbers have spotlighted Roberto Rossellini, John Cassavetes, Alfred Hitchcock,

Woody Allen, Wim Wenders, Joseph Losey, D. W. Griffith and Paul Morrissey.

Greenaway's cinematic ideas are innovative, and his artistic ability is evident. The former film editor first gained attention in 1980 when his parodic *The Falls* — described as an "epic mock-documentary" — was the first British picture in 30 years to be named Best Film by the BFI. His witty *The Draughtsman's Contract* had a visual elegance that belied its Super 16mm origins, and *Prospero's Books* proved a very unconventional adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Lawrence discusses Greenaway's seven features and many of his short films, with considerable input from the director himself. All of this deliberation leads up to his magnum opus — *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* — which Lawrence and many others consider to be a masterpiece.

This reviewer, however, begs to differ: two essentials of good art are skill and taste. While *The Cook* reveals the director's skill with actors and penchant for rather Fellini-like visuals, the film itself is permeated with sadism, perversion, coprophagy and cannibalism. Early in its harrowing two hours, some men strip an elderly man naked, plaster him with dog excrement, shove several fistfuls of the feces down his throat and then urinate on him. A nude love scene takes place in a toilet booth. Vomiting occurs at the dinner table and elsewhere. A woman's face is stabbed with a fork. Dialogue ensues about the drinking of urine and kinky sex acts involving a bottle, a wooden spoon, a toothbrush and a toy train. A boy soprano shrills incessantly until a gangster shears off his belly button. The wife's bookworm lover is murdered by having various tomes' torn pages rammed down his gullet. For the grand finale, the victim is baked whole and fed, naked and steaming, to his murderer, who is then himself shot to death at point-blank range by his embittered wife. Well, to each his own.

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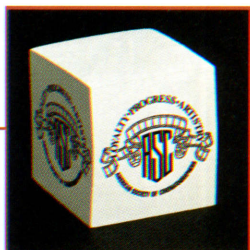
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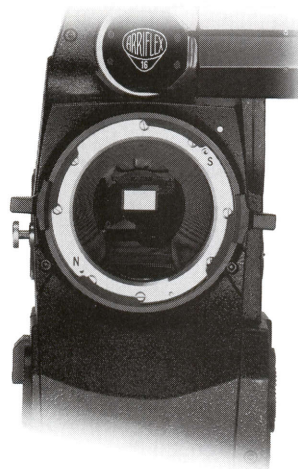


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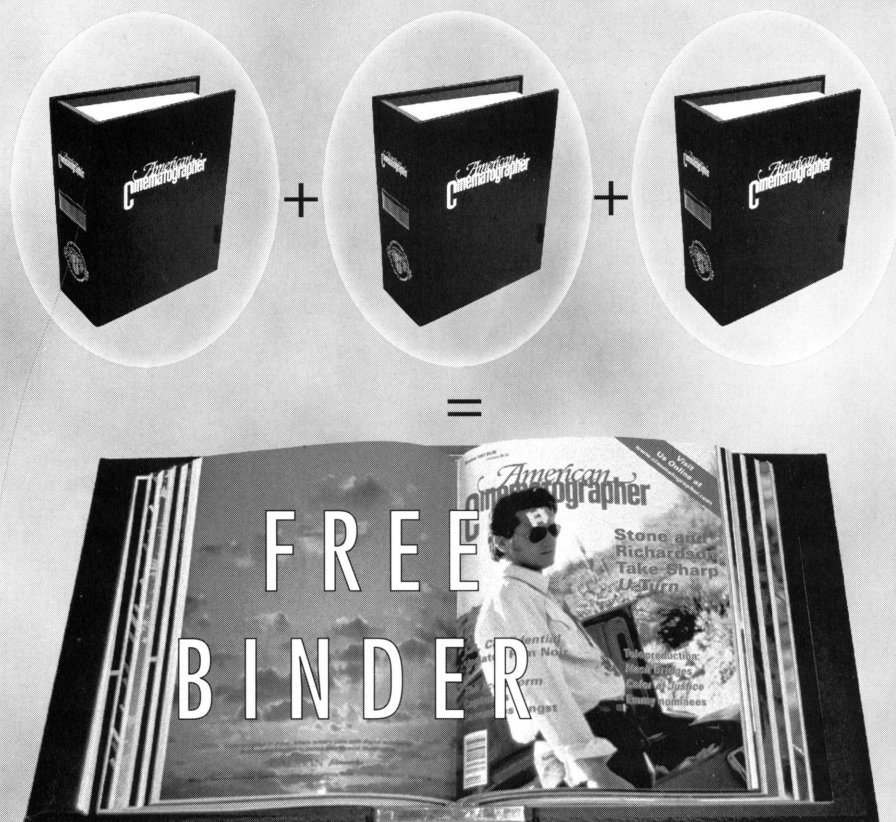
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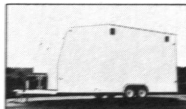
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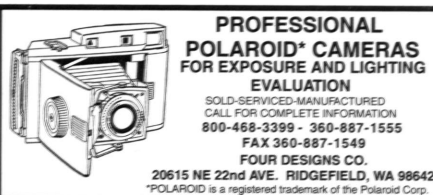


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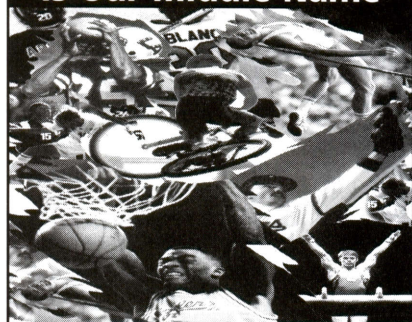
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IN MEMORIAM

Stanley Cortez, ASC, a past president and 63-year member of the American Society of Cinematographers, died of a heart attack on December 23, 1997. He was 92.

Artistry and versatility won Cortez wide renown, particularly for such classics as Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) and Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955); he earned Academy Award nominations for both films and won the Film Critics of America Award for *Ambersons*. In 1990, he received the ASC's Lifetime Achievement Award, which is "conferred upon a director of photography whose imprint has been left on the visual record of film history."

A child of Austrian immigrants, he was born Stanislaus Kranz in New York City's Lower East Side on November 4, 1905. An older brother, Jack, became the movie star Ricardo Cortez. Stan began his photographic career in New York City as a teenaged assistant to several leading Fifth Avenue still photographers, including Edward Steichen. One day he happened to watch a Pathé News photographer, Willard Van der Veer, ASC, covering a parade; that encounter enticed him toward his lifelong career in cinematography.

In 1925, when Ricardo was working on *The Sorrows of Satan* at Paramount's Long Island studio, Stan visited his brother on-set, and was deeply impressed by the director, D. W. Griffith, with whom he eventually worked in later years. The scope of the production and excitement of the medium convinced Stanley that he belonged in the motion picture field. Soon after, he became assistant to Cecil B. DeMille's great cinematographer, Alvin Wyckoff, ASC, at Paramount.

During the last years of silent films, the Cortez brothers moved to Hollywood, where Stanley worked first as an assistant, then operator for some of the top directors of photography at various studios. Some of his fondest memories were of working with Hal Mohr, ASC at Universal.

Cortez became a director of photography in 1937 at Universal with *Four Day Wonder*. He remained with that studio for years, honing his craft on everything from slick mystery pictures to such large-scale productions as *Smash-Up*, *Eagle Squadron*, *Flesh and Fantasy*, *The Secret Beyond the Door* and *Badlands of Dakota*. Orson Welles was more interested in the elegant pictorial style Cortez brought to such low-budget pictures as *The Black Doll*, *Danger on the Air*, *The Last Express* and especially *The Black Cat*. Welles borrowed the cameraman in 1942 to shoot *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

In subsequent years, the cinematographer worked under contract for David O. Selznick and Walter Wanger; during that period, however, the last film Cortez photographed as a civilian was Selznick's *Since You Went Away*. When World War II intervened, the Signal Corps became his studio chief, and the Army Pictorial Service his producer. A "buck private among generals," as he put it, Cortez captured the activities of the chiefs of staff at the Pentagon and, later, the commander-in-chief himself. This coverage included the Yalta and Quebec conferences and, ultimately, the funeral cortege of President Roosevelt's body as it was taken to the Washington, D.C. railroad station.

With the end of the war, Cortez resumed his position as a leading Hollywood cinematographer, photographing many features here and abroad. For his work on the 1949 mystery thriller *The Man on the Eiffel Tower*, shot in Paris, he won the French equivalent of the Academy Award and was made an honorary citizen of Paris. *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) was notable for its changing moods, which augmented Joanne Woodward's Academy Award-winning performance as a woman with three distinct personalities.

Other Cortez films which were

highly praised for their photographic excellence include *The Diamond Queen*, *Black Tuesday*, *Top Secret Affair*, *Blue*, *Man from Del Rio*, *Thunder in the Sun*, *Back Street*, *Shock Corridor*, *The Naked Kiss*, and *The Bridge at Remagen*, which was made behind the Iron Curtain under perilous conditions in 1969.

In 1989, Cortez made a statement before the U.S. Senate subcommittee on patents, copyrights and trade-



marks, speaking for the ASC on the importance of preserving films as they were originally photographed.

Cortez served two terms as ASC president and several as vice president, and also volunteered as a member of numerous committees. He also sat on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and was a member of the USC film fraternity. Cortez even penned an entry on cinematography for *The Encyclopedia Britannica*.

He is survived by his cousin, Stanley Lefcourt of Brentwood; a sister-in law, Margaret Cortez; and two nephews, Donald and Barry Kranz, all of New York. Services were held on December 28 at Mount Sinai Memorial Park. The family has requested that those wishing to make a donation in his memory should do so to a charity of their choice. ■

From the Clubhouse



Goldsmith, Semler Join ASC

The ASC's newest active member is New York City native **Paul Goldsmith**. After leaving NYU Film School, he began shooting documentaries and small fictional films for public TV. Among those were the recently rediscovered *Men in Crisis* (for Woody Allen), *When We Were Kings* and *The Wright Brothers*. He relocated to California to become a partner in the video group TVTV (Top Value Television) where he received the opportunity to produce and edit. Among the group's shows was *Hard Rain*, a TV special for Bob Dylan which grew out of Goldsmith's prior contact with the folk musician during the filming of *Renaldo and Clara*, a feature documentary on Dylan. He continued in documentaries as a director/cameraman for the NBC series *Lifeline* until he received the opportunity to work with Haskell Wexler, ASC on commercials. This contact ultimately led to Goldsmith's assignment to shoot the television movie *Annihilator* for Michael Chapman, ASC.

Goldsmith's other TV credits include the MOWs *House of Mirth* and *Winnie* and the pilots for *Against the Law* and *Starman*, as well as *Big Time*, *Mountain View*, *The Rymers of Eldridge*, *Supervision* and several episodes of the *Max Headroom* series. In addition to shooting music videos for the Smashing Pumpkins, James Taylor, C+C Music Factory, INXS and Devo, Goldsmith has an extensive list of commercials to his credit. His feature photography includes *Wavelength*, *Killing Time*, and *A Shock to the System*.

Also joining the ASC is Australian native **Dean Semler, ACS**, who began his cinematographic career during the Sixties wielding a 16mm Bell & Howell camera as a reporter for South Australia's burgeoning TV industry. Through fellow countryman Donald McAlpine, ASC, Semler became introduced to the Film Australia filmmaking

center where he received experience in 35mm and color cinematography. Semler's extensive film credits include *Let The Ballon Go*, *The Road Warrior*, *Undercover*, *Razorback* (winner of Australian Film Award's Best Cinematography prize), *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *The Lighthorsemen*, *Young Guns*, *Cocktail*, *Dead Calm* (winner of Australian Film Award's Best Cinematography prize), *Farewell to the King*, *Dances with Wolves* (winner of both an Academy and ASC Award), *Power of One*, *Last Action Hero*, *Waterworld*, and *The Trojan War*. Semler recently embarked upon a directorial career with the action thriller *Firestorm*.

New Associates

The following ASC associate members were also inducted:

Steve Garfinkel is a Newark, New Jersey native who is currently serving as a Kodak production account executive; he has more than 20 years of experience in the motion picture industry. He first became interested in film at the age of nine, after discovering his father's 8mm camera; he progressed to Super 8 in junior high and 16mm in high school, where he began shooting football and basketball team films in the early Seventies. Garfinkel went on to earn a degree in film production from Ithaca College; after graduating, he accepted a position at NBC Newsfilm in New York. After a four-year stint there, he was hired by Showtime as a postproduction supervisor. In the Eighties, Garfinkel served as general manager at MovieLab Video in New York, also working as a freelance cinematographer on music videos and industrial films. Three years ago, he joined Kodak, where he has most recently been involved with episodic TV production accounts.

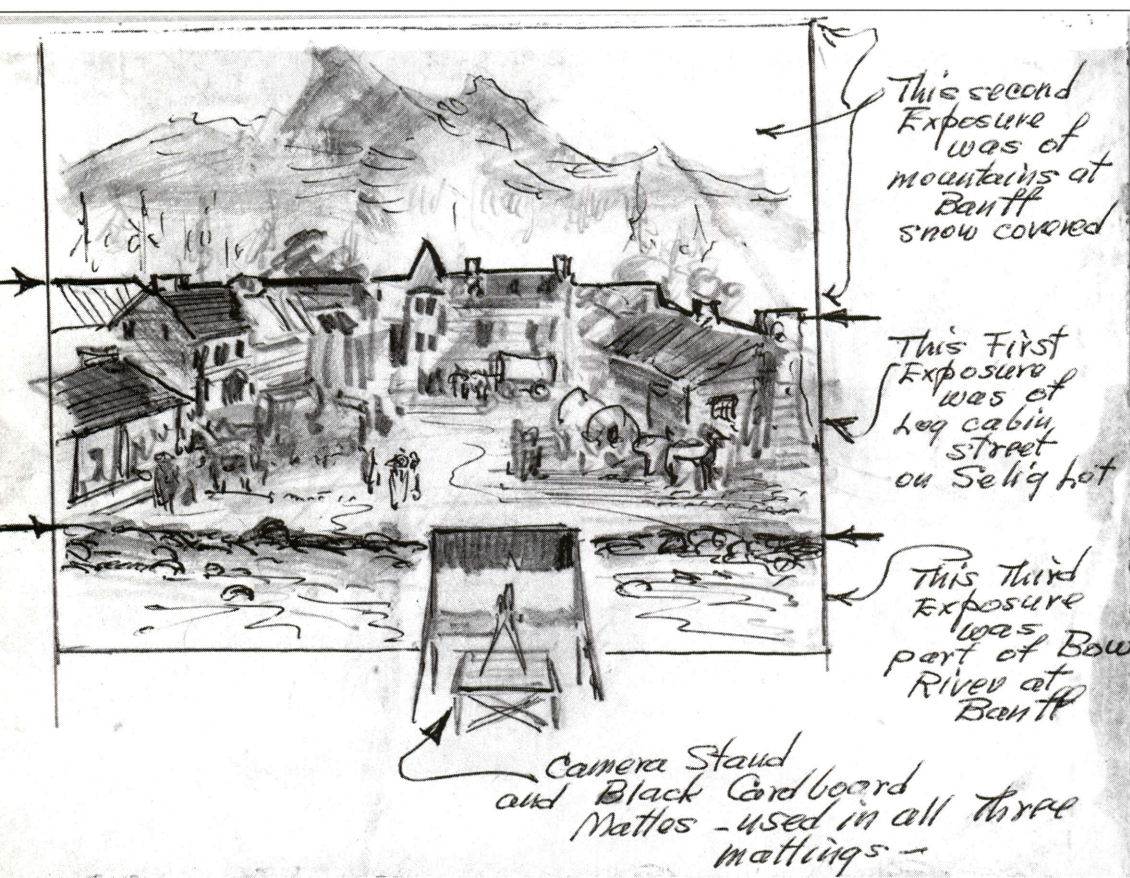
Lighting designer **Frieder Hochheim** is a Canadian native and the president of Kino Flo Inc. For three years,

he worked as a camera operator for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in his hometown of Winnipeg, Manitoba. He studied film as an undergraduate at Ryerson Polytechnical University in Toronto; after completion of his studies, he remained in the city to work as a freelance gaffer. In 1979, he starred in and produced a film — *Plurality of Vibratory Circumstances* — which the National Gallery of Canada purchased as one of 10 films representing the Canadian Avant-Garde Cinema for that year. He was also a founding member of The Funnel, an experimental film and photographic gallery in Toronto which featured traveling filmmakers from all over the globe, as well as a union known as the Association of Canadian Film Craftspeople.

Hochheim additionally worked as a gaffer on the films *Quest for Fire*, *Crimes of Passion*, *No Mercy*, *The Believers*, *Barfly*, *Earth Girls Are Easy*, *The Tender* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. In 1987, he founded Kino Flo Inc., which designs and manufactures lightweight fluorescent lighting systems tailored to the needs of the motion-picture and imaging industries. In 1990, he was granted a U.S. patent for the Portable Fluorescent Lighting System, and also developed a full-spectrum 5500°K fluorescent lamp; two years later, he engineered the full-spectrum 3200°K fluorescent lamp. In 1995, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented Hochheim with a Technical Achievement Award for the invention of the Kino Flo system. During the following year, his output was no less prodigious, as he devised a full-spectrum 2900°K fluorescent lamp. ■

More information about the ASC can be found at www.cinematographer.com.

WRAP SHOT



Obviously, this Wrap Shot is not a photo, but the drawing is especially appropriate for this month's *American Cinematographer*, which spotlights independent filmmakers. The sketch was done many years ago by Norman A. Dawn, ASC, who was the *most* independent moviemaker in the industry's history. The drawing displays how he achieved a three-element, in-camera matte shot for Col. William Selig's production, *The Spoilers* — in 1914, no less! All three elements — mountains in Canada, street set in California, river in Canada — were live-action shots protected by black cardboard mattes.

By the time Dawn executed this triple matte shot, he was already an old pro with six years of experience. Born in Argentina in 1884, he worked in Los Angeles as a commercial artist and still

photographer before he began making movies. He is the first known cinematographer to execute glass shots, which he did in 1907 to "restore" crumbling buildings on his first film, *California Missions*. Dawn was anxious to "dispel any notion that I invented this technique — I merely built onto it and took advantage of conditions to advance an art in the making. . . One must not get the idea that other men were not doing things too. How much, will never be known." He acquired the idea, he said, from his boss at Thorpe Engraving Co. in Los Angeles, who used the method while making still photos. The boss was Max Handsheigl, who later entered the motion picture business as an inventor.

Dawn was practically a one-man movie studio. Although cinematography was his chosen profession, he also func-

tioned as producer, director, writer, designer, visual effects cameraman, matte painter, production illustrator and film editor. He could also accomplish whatever else needed doing, including inventing equipment on the spot. For years, he traveled much of the world making travelogues with his \$500 French Debie camera, but these films were different from the usual offerings in that Dawn often utilized glass art and mattes to better their look. In South America circa 1907, he photographed Indian women bathing in a pool behind a hotel; erected on the back verandah was a plate glass window, on which Dawn painted a Mayan temple and a monument on a hill, which blended in perfectly with

the live scene. In 1913 he used back projection in *The Drifter*.

Between expeditions in the 1920s, he directed features and also devised special photographic effects for Universal, MGM, Pathé and other companies. His *pièce de résistance* was the most celebrated Australian silent picture, *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1926), for which he built a large studio and laboratory.

Afterwards, Dawn continued to make movies on his own, including several in Alaska, such as *Orphans of the North*, *Call of the Yukon* and *Tundra*. He still checked into Hollywood every so often to do special effects work. After retiring, he continued his photographic experiments until his death in 1975 at the age of 88.

— George Turner

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